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CATHARA CLYDE:

A NOVEL.

BY

" INCONNUE."



NEW YORK:
CHARLES SCRIBNER, 124 GRAND STREET.
1860. 



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Inconni

CATHARA CLYDE:

A NOVEL.

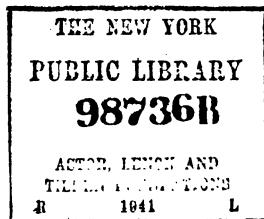
BY

" INCONNNU."



NEW YORK:
CHARLES SCRIBNER, 124 GRAND STREET.

1860. ✕



Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1860, by
CHARLES SCRIBNER,
In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the South-
ern District of New York.

“ It is the ideal for whose realizations man will spare no strivings, sacrifices, and toils. If kept true, it will be the most potent charmer to hallow grief and to sweeten care. You cannot do him a greater wrong than to darken it, or turn it into a fatuous light that shall lead him astray.”

Athanasia.

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CHAPTER I.

CHRISTMAS TIME.

It was the night before Christmas Eve. The old church in Vicaring was darkened with odorous boughs, summoned from the wild wood to do homage to their Maker, and long, green wreaths and chaplets festooned the little quaint windows, and breathed incense throughout the narrow aisles. A genial warmth pervaded the interior, which was lit by large clusters of wax candles. The members of the choir had been practising the chaunts and hymns preparatory to the coming evening. Near the altar stood a young girl. A robe of white cashmere, fitting closely, revealed the lines of grace which marked her form; while, carelessly depending from her shoulders, drooped a mantle of marine blue, the hood of which encircled her dark hair, as it waved from the full, fair temples. Her eyes were large and dark; courage and cheerfulness shone from out their dewy depths. A small and pensive mouth gave a

marked aspect, and rendered her face almost sad, when the eyes looked down; but when she raised their heavy fringes, a radiant gleam presided in the starlike orbs. Beside her stood a gentleman past middle age, and of placid aspect; his eyes emitting a gentle sparkle whenever he looked at her, which was most of the time, with an air of one who guarded a treasure.

“Come, Cathara,” cried three young voices, “you are wanted now, to sing the solo.”

The young girl yielded to their caressing ways, and gliding lightly over the carpeted aisle, mounted the steps to the choir. After a few notes of prelude from the organ, she commenced to sing one of Handel’s divine songs from the *Messiah*. Her voice was of no great compass, but the tone was remarkably calm, pure, and richly modulated. It was a voice to produce an instant hush. The expression of her face, now devoid of all color, was exalted and seraphic, like one who worships, yet not afar, but draws near to those who dwell in the land of the beautiful. A stranger had entered the church while she sang, and lingered, admiring, rather than absorbed in, the lofty strain. When the music had ceased, he eagerly inquired of a gentleman near him who the singer could be?

When he heard her name, he rejoined, “Is she English?”

“She is of English parentage, but was born in this country; there is her uncle, Mr. Sterling,” was the reply.

Upon this, the stranger approached, and introduced himself as “Norman Astonley.”

“I believe I have the honor to be a relative of your niece, Miss Clyde. I also have some letters from England for you, which I beg leave to present.”



"When did you arrive in our village, and will you go home with me to-night?"

"Not to-night, but to-morrow I will accept your hospitality," said the stranger, bowing quietly, and turning to withdraw.

"Well, then, good evening—and here, don't forget to bring all your baggage with you, so that if you get snowed in, you will have nothing to make you uneasy."

Astonley, left to himself, tramps lightly down the creaking snow-path, to the village inn, where a brilliant fire awaits him. As he stands in the light of the ardent flame, his eyes, which appear smaller than they are, from the overhanging brow, glitter like drops of jet. His face is almost stolid, without the least expression that might reveal a passing thought, or give you a hint of his inner life. His mouth is extremely handsome, and his smile most winning or haughty, just as he chooses. His complexion is dark for an Englishman, of a pure olive, smooth and fine in texture, bringing out the statuesque aspect of the face to great advantage. He wears no beard, save a mere line of very dark moustache. He looks twenty-four; he is twenty-eight. His figure is of full medium height, of perfect proportion, and graceful in every attitude. His whole aspect is cool and impenetrable as that of an Indian.

It was two years since Norman Astonley had visited the United States; this, then, was his second visit. He had but recently learned that he had a cousin residing in the little village of Vicaring, one of the many pretty towns upon the Connecticut River. A cousin, young, beautiful, an heiress, too. He left Boston as soon as practicable, after learning this fact; and, upon arriving at the village, and inquiring of the landlady about Mr.

Sterling and his niece, the knowing little woman advised him "to go over to the Church, which was near, if he would like to see them that evening, for there Miss Clyde practised with the choir, to sing on Christmas day."

So far he was pleased with his success ; he only wished that he had not wasted two years of intervening time, "a lost parenthesis to me," he reflected ; "but n'importe ; why heave sighs over the past ? Make the most of the present." And with this bit of sedative philosophy, he slept soundly.

The residence of Mr. Sterling was built upon the apex of a mountainous elevation, and to the spectator in the valley, appeared to hang in the clouds ; but at the summit stretched a grand plateau, and its ideal dimensions grew less aerial, and available enough for man's uses. The view therefrom was comprehensive and interesting, including several picturesque villages, a portion of the Connecticut Valley, and some far-off ridges of the White Mountains. The house was a well-built modern structure, not boasting many architectural conceals, but thoroughly comfortable in all its appliances.

Upon the broad verandah stands Cathara, wrapping a fur cloak about her, while her uncle sits in the cutter, well covered with handsome robes to the chin.

"Fly down, Little Lady ; the morning is cold, and the horses frisky and impatient to be off."

Cathara is by his side in an instant ; they wind round the hill, descend to the village, and stop at the post-office ; the old gentleman is as particular about his papers and letters, as he is punctilious to obey the laws which he believes will insure health.

"Love oxygen," he would say, often, and with great

emphasis, to Cathara. "Respect your body as well as your mind."

The young girl would sometimes anticipate, and say, "Uncle, oxygen is a life-giving principle, respect oxygen, &c.," to which, as if struck by an idea, whose power had just impressed him, he would reply with gleeful animation,

"There you are right, Cathara; hold fast to that, it is great doctrine."

When they had returned from their ride, her uncle led her to the mirror:

"See, I have painted your cheeks with English roses."

"Red oxygen, I suppose," she answered, smilingly. "But at what hour do you expect this English Cousin?"

"I dare say in time for dinner. Are you impatient to see him?"

"Yes, it is quite an event, and I am told many of the English have such crude ideas of the semi-civilized Americans, that I presume he will be disappointed not to find me entering to welcome him in blue paint and feathers, *corsage a la wampum*, and a moccasin buskin."

"At all events, I hope he appreciates a good microscope, and then I can promise him entertainment enough, eh! Cathara?"

"You can, doubtless, if he is fond of that kind of amusement, and we will trust that he is, and also that he is not a silent man, one of those social vampires, such as came to visit us last year, who absorbed all our spirits and vitality, leaving us to feel like the merest husk."

"If he is, he certainly is a very handsome one," re-

plied her uncle ; "but," detaining her as she was departing from the room,

"Have you seen my nephew this morning?"

Cathara shook her head.

"No? Dear Arthur ; there is something wrong in the blood ;" looking perplexed, "poor fellow ; I am sure the microscope would tell the story, would it not, Cathara? if I could but get a globule of the arterial current! And is it not strange he is so reluctant to show me his tongue, that nice little time-table of the pulses? He ought to throw his heart and soul into science ; it would restore his health, I am certain. What the deuce is it, Cathara," rubbing his forehead with a puzzled air, "that has done such mortal injury to the life-blood? His blanched cheek tells a story, if his tongue will not. Faces never lie, it is said. I should like to put him through a course of electricity and ether ; I will consult the Doctor ; there he comes ; you may go, Little Lady."

And while he lost himself in a deep discussion of his nephew's peculiar illness, and made many a discursive observation with his microscope in close conclave with his chum and friend Dr. Fairfax, Cathara ran eagerly to her painting room, whose solitude she delighted to people with the creations of her own fancy. Her tastes were artistic. Her love of music reverential. She looked up to the Ideal, rejoiced in it, and tried to serve it, as best she might. To this end, she studied herself, and the resources within her personality. She at once commenced working at a picture that rested upon her easel. It represented a face, where innocence sat like a signet, upon the regal brow. The pale, gray clouds of the sky, drifted on either side, like wings, over which streamed long locks of golden hair, bright

with the brightness of heaven. The tender violet light of morning was just awaking over a restless sea, whose white foam crested the green waves. It was a dream she once had of her mother, who appeared to watch her, from out the clouds, as she seemed borne on towards some dangerous, unknown, untried sea.

She had no skill to paint landscapes. It was only some figure or group, that, unbidden, came and haunted her mind, as with a living presence. At first, they appeared in hints of dim, vague beauty; by degrees, the mystic lithograph stood out in lines of fire, clothed with completeness. Then she painted. Long intervals would frequently elapse, when her fancy lay untroubled, even by the shadow of a descending angel.

In her bed-room hung a picture of two figures, whom she often saw in her mind's eye, at church, when the voluntary sounded. Their features, though unknown, had something familiar in them, like those dead and gone before, now clothed upon with immortality. The lines of their white and shining vestments were surpassingly graceful, the expression radiant, although their heads were downcast and shadowy. In the moonlight, Cathara was often startled to see how super-earthly these two appeared. There was nothing in the least unnatural about these poetic fancies. It was, however, only these that stimulated her to take the brush, and prepare the colors, for the palette; just as the musician writes down his score, or the poet his thought.

CHAPTER II.

THE INVALID.

ADJOINING the domelit room which Cathara had chosen for her studio, was a large oval apartment. It was adorned with two fine groups, in marble, and several single busts, elevated upon black marble pedestals ; of Beethoven, Raphael, Schiller, and Fenelon ; and between these, antique tables inlaid with agates, ivory, and mosaics, representative of Roman architecture, were covered with numberless *curioses*, medals, and coins, of quaint selection ; and at intervals, between these, were masses of heavily embossed, highly colored, richly bound volumes. Upon open standards lay outspread Westwood's *Palaco Graphia Sacra*, Audubon's *American Birds*, *Midsummer-Night's Dream*, copies of *Decorations from the Middle Ages*, and the *Dance of Death*, with German illustrations. Flowers, fresh gathered from the hot-house, bloomed upon a little stand. The windows were amply draped with rich gold-colored brocade hangings, through whose parted vistas was seen the glorious azure of the firmament, the dark emerald of the hemlocks, the distant, snow-capped, wintry hills.

Upon the lounge, drawn near the window, reclined a young man, whose presence alone would have adorned a room ; but here, surrounded by the suggestions of art and learning, he appeared like an inspiration, or

the ideal of an æsthetic scholar. About his head clustered thick set curls of the finest texture, light chestnut in hue, inclining to gold. His face, half hid by the green velvet cushion, left the profile alone visible to Cathara as she entered. It was of a rare and exquisite cast, and white and marble-like as the statuary about him, but it differed, in that the eye was purely brilliant with an unnatural lustre. The chest, so broad, gave token of strength ; the limbs, though slender, looked athletic ; yet, it was evident that the strength of this bough, once strong as a young cedar of Lebanon, had been withered and blighted in this, his early manhood.

The young girl, standing with the drawing implements in her hand, and fixing her eyes upon him, began quickly to jot down, here and there upon the paper, hints intelligible to the artist, but the slight movement of the pencil irritated the invalid. Cathara caught the expression of pain that knit his brow, and springing forward noiselessly, seated herself on a low chair beside him, and took his hand in hers.

“Did I disturb you, Arthur ? Forgive me.”

“Yes, but your voice soothes me. I was thinking, when you entered, what could have been the intent of Providence in creating me ; it is not at all manifest to my benighted vision.”

“Are you not better this afternoon ?” inquired the young girl, trying to prevent him from following out his train of morbid fancies.

“The peace of the morning is far from me ; the night brings me no rest. I have done with this earth. I am no more of it. Oh ! that some one would lead me to my home, my everlasting home. I am quite astray here. *I was strong* towards the earth, and happy

once, when, thirsting for knowledge, I left the casket clasp of earth's jewel ; her mines of intellectual lore; her strongholds of literature ; when I studied man, eras, epochs, climes, manners, customs, laws, art, and sciences ; when I rifled all languages of their secrets ; when I travelled over the sands of Arabia ; the more gloomy bays of Asia. I have dwelt on the Grecian shores where Homer sang. I have been even to the frozen polar seas with their dreary latitudes of melancholy wastes ; all this to feed my imagination ; and yet, despite these reminiscences which burn along the past, despite all my endless longings and strivings to soar, to realize the divine pleasure and power of composition, forever I am on the earth, doomed to wander like the overspent Jew among material things. My life will be of no more account than the prints which a caravan leaves in the sand ; mere dust and vapor to vanish in empty air. No written memorial, no heroic deed achieved ; no good word spoken ; all my ambition mere frantic pretension ;" and raising himself quickly, nervously he laid hold of a crutch near him, and leaning his right hand upon Cathara's shoulder, he commenced slowly pacing the room.

" Does not the sound of this crutch annoy your fine taste ? " he asked, glancing at her with an embarrassed, painful air.

" Not in the least. Do I walk too fast for you ? "

" No ;" and he continued with short, painful breath, " I am a miserable sentimental fellow, Cathara. Would to God that I had got this shrunken thigh as Jacob did, by wrestling for a blessing from Heaven ; but oh ! shame, a woman's love has prevailed over me. I have been an intolerable dreamer ever since I lost that siren, false Lulu Lee. Oh ! must I thus perish inglori-

ously? My ambition wrecked, all for a false woman! I condemn and hate myself for it," and seating himself, he buried his face in his hands.

"Your love for her was pure and unselfish; be thankful that your heart could bloom into so perfect an offering," whispered Cathara in his ear, in gentle accents.

"We are born to play tragedies," replied the young man, quite unconsoled. "Sooner or later all have to enact their part. Mine is over and ended. I pray the curtain may soon fall."

"And leave me?"

"You!" turning and looking into her face. "You are strong, Cathara; your finely tempered spirit beats with a strong wing towards heaven. Birds sing in your voice. Something there is in your movements airy and gliding, like the sweeping current of a bright river. Your presence is balm and delight. Forms of grace spring from your beautiful hand. You are creative. The creators are the Titans of our race. Untired in prophecy, in forecasting great events. You do the world's work. In Watt's quick pulses, set, too, I have read, in frail and very delicately fashioned framework, lay such throbbing, inventive life, he must needs live almost a century of years, in order to match his speeding arteries with steam's unflagging breath.

"Howard could walk with the vile and outcast, and behold immortal seraphs beneath those scarred and ruined visages, and the heavenly vision led him on through a self-denial incredible.

"I have no head to devise, no hand to execute, pictures like yours, of angelic device or import. I am no seer, no philanthropist. I have no splendid conceits, no guiding seraphim to help me over the steep and

thorny road. Or is it this yearning for death that saps and undermines my energies? I am naught but a parasite. I throve on false Lulu Lee's love; I grew strong in her smiles. How bitter is that joy in remembrance; how acrid, corrosive, detestable. The pretty coquette made my wild, tender, unworldly love, a subject for coarse and scornful pleasantry. I heard my name fly trippingly from her tongue, one morning just as I was entering her boudoir. I paused by the door; there were a pretty set of gallants present. She gave them the history of my preference for her, my verdant style of courtship, my solemn ways, my singular gifts; told them that when, at last, I pressed her to name the marriage hour, she informed me that she had first to break six other engagements; that then my laugh of consternation absolutely was the most amusing thing she ever heard. Ah! Cathara, you should have seen the cruel, maddening, fascinating lustre of her haughty eyes, when I entered, and gave a long, scornful whistle to call my dog, who, couched beneath her slender hand, forgot his allegiance to me. I do not wonder. I left her forever, and still she was always with me. I struggled against the fetters of the siren. The self-fed passion grew more steadfast from its torturing hopelessness. I felt the thralldom weak, unworthy. I was bound in a degrading vassalage, whose bonds I could not sunder. It was that perpetual, ever-recurring conviction that chafed me into a fever. After weeks of prostration, lassitude, forgetfulness, a long fit of illness, I came to move again, not to live. I have never lived since then. I found this limb withered and grown shorter. Now you have it all, sweet cousin. It is a miserable account, but I promised to relate it to you some day before I died. I shall die soon,"—and he leaned half fainting

against Cathara. In a moment he rallied, and seizing her hand, "Cathara, promise me this one thing: If ever you should meet Lulu Lee, if it be ten years hence, tell her I died of a broken heart, a broken spirit, and a broken vow; promise me by all that is sacred,"—seeing her looking pained and reluctant, "that is the only favor I ask." At last she assented.

The young girl had in vain essayed to quell this outpouring; now she bent over him, all tenderness, bathing his forehead with perfumed water.

"Keep the doctor out; I hear him coming; he is repugnant to me. Tell him out of the heart are the issues of life. I have no heart—it dissolved within me long ago."

"It is your kind uncle, Arthur."

"Never mind, I cannot see him now; he probably brought a microscope with him to examine my tongue. He will say there is too little iron in the blood; tell him that it has all entered into my soul."

A pause intervened, a silence of half an hour. The scornful look had passed from the invalid's face. He opened his eyes and fixed them upon Cathara.

"How pale you are! I have wearied you. Say something, Sweet."

"Earth hath no sorrows that Heaven cannot cure,"

she murmured, laying his thin hand upon her cheek.

"Do not love then, darling? Shun us, shun mankind, compounds of grossness and imperfection. They will teach your smile, which has no bitterness in it now, to turn bitter; your sweet lips to wear scorn; your looks, fixed on them, to grow alien to heaven with the impious rage of mad jealousy. But speak again, Cathara, and I will not answer back, nor break

the music silence. Then you shall go away and leave me, while I keep your words for frankincense and medicine."

His passionate, restless, weary gaze was for a moment fixed upon her, with the eager look of a boy, for he was not much more in years, as Cathara drew his lounge so as to front the setting sun.

"How beautiful!" exclaimed the young girl, kneeling beside him, in a voice hushed but thrilling. The light that usually slumbered in the darkest shade of her eyes woke up, as her glance followed the lucid amber waves that the down-dropping sun had left. "I do not wonder that the Indian should believe that the Great Spirit dwells in the land of the setting sun; for see, Arthur, those regions of ruby, topaz, sapphire, band together in the form of a porch, that might fitly usher us into the glory of the Heaven of Heavens—into the presence of His Brightness. And it is sweet to believe that every ray that lights this beautiful earth, with its exhaustless variety of tint and modulation of shadow, all the burning effulgence and wayward loveliness, falls upon us from that *not* far-distant country, since we can almost touch yon fleecy fretwork of solemn gold. There, leaning over the jewelled battlements, I can fancy that I see faces such as come to us in dreams, beckoning us away with hints of realms mysterious, such as mortal eye hath not seen. And is it not from that unknown land come those tones, so sweetly strange, that thrill us, we know not whence, for earthly they are not. And have you never felt a breath go by, a fragrance, wafted from some heavenly censer, which turns you sad to the verge of home-sickness, with insufficient tidings from that Better Land. This mystic life within, crying to be released from the body of this

death—its fleshly thrall,—akin to God's infinitude, yet entombed in time and sense, how can we but question perpetually about that Lasting Home?

“This illuminated page of the dying day, let us take it, not as Pagans, with eyes of stupid wonder. We cannot all decipher the mystic radiant hieroglyph, but we know that Love Divine set his signet in an octave of colors. Here they outrun the arching prism, and canopy half the domain of Heaven.

(“Will not Love, Rest, Peace, make good-morrows for eternity? ”)

And stooping, she kissed his pale brow, drew close the curtains to keep out the gloaming, gathered the dying embers of the fire into a cheerful blaze, kindled the shaded globe upon the table with a taper, and stole softly out.

CHAPTER III.

THE MOUNTAIN HOME.

ASTONLEY gazed with a good share of curiosity upon the wintry New England landscape, spread out in an unbroken mantle of snow, as he climbed round the hill side which led up to his cousin's home. He wondered what could have induced Mr. Sterling to construct so remote an eyrie, isolated and spectral. It was like going up to the upper world by a crystal portal, tall and narrow. The giant pines draped in the light snow which had recently fallen, ranged like marble obelisks, column after column up the steep ascent, or here and there a vast elm, spread vertical over his head a network of fine white lace and pendulous thorns, transparent as diamonds and sharp as dragons' teeth. Upon a fragment of purple cloud the sun crouched in the west, and tinged with its last cold clear ray, the shag-breast of this rugged mount, and the belt of evergreens that congregated like chieftains above the scrub trees, and about the approach to the house. He alighted, and was ushered into an anteroom, where a servant divested him of his heavy cloak, and led him into the drawing-room. Its summer warmth, the ample dimensions of the grate and its ruddy sea-coal fire, the dark crimson texture of the moss-like carpet, the long curtains of the same rich shade, the broad lounges and pillows, suggested an

abundance of comfort, more than enough to baffle the grim spectres of cold, solitude, estrangement, all of which had beset our luxury-loving traveller on his way to this fortress. Even the gentle breathing of Mr. Sterling, asleep, and purring like a contented cat, from the depths of his environing Sultana chair, was a sound welcome to the Englishman, as well as the sight of a spotted pointer, who kept his brown muzzle buried in the rug, as still farther confirmatory of the genial impression. Otherwise, silence reigned, when the door opened, and the young girl of whom he had caught but a partial view at the church, entered. The man of the world felt his heart actually bound within his bosom, as he looked upon her loveliness. Her elegant, flexible figure, was attired in a dress of deep blue silk, with long pointed, hanging, Venetian sleeves. A fillet of the same shade crossed the lustrous velvet tresses. No hue could better have set off the perfection of the slender snowy throat, encircled by its collar of rare lace. Her cheek wore a tinge faint and clear, the delicacy and paleness adding to the perfection and grace of the outline. It was difficult not to be dazzled by the flash of light from her eyes which glowed with so fervent a ray, and lit up her forehead with a pure concentrate gleam. The Englishman's vivid, passionate eyes expressed all this more eloquently than words could; and as he held her hand in his for a moment, with infinite grace and lightness, he hoped for some answering consciousness. But she neither turned bashfully pleased away, and prolonged the flattering tribute to herself, nor appeared to note his beauty or power of address, but waved him to a seat with an air of gentle unconsciousness.

“The dark groves and wild remoteness of your

home, cousin Cathara, remind me of some ancient Druid abode, and I do not know that the priestess who has just entered, altogether absolves me from the idea."

"But my uncle will," said the lady, smiling, as the dinner was announced, which summons the amiable *bon vivant* never failed to hear, even in the midst of a profound slumber.

"Why, Norman, is this you?" rising and shaking hands. "God bless you, my boy; you are the image of your father. Just in time for dinner; I dare say you are hungry; I hope you enjoy fine health. The weather is colder here than the English climate gives you; clear, tonic, bracing; nothing could be finer for a man of sound lungs. I dare say you are cold, but you know a man is ten degrees warmer after having eaten a good dinner," and the kind-hearted host ran on towards the luxurious dining-room, rubbing his hands gleefully, as though he felt secure of good ammunition, sufficient to keep grim old winter at bay.

After a general discussion of edibles had been insured, and Mr. Sterling had ensconced himself once more in his crimson cushion, by the fireside, with pointer Pluto at his feet, he was the picture of complacency.

"I believe in good living, on high moral grounds," said he, addressing Astonley. "Where is the man who feels like going out to knock another down, to beat some poor vagrant, or to do any other cruel act, after having eaten a good dinner, eh, Norman?"

"It certainly does mitigate the wolf and develop the lamb," laughing, as he looked at his uncle's half nodding head, in vain efforts to ward off his usual *siesta*. Mr. Sterling roused himself.

"When did you leave England?"

“Just two months since, and your mountains remind me of the icebergs which we encountered on our passage, and which only steam and a favoring gale enabled us to outspeed.”

“I long to see those wrathful visions, passing on in awful pomp,” said Cathara, dreamily looking into the fire.

“Then we should rejoice over your preservation as well as at your arrival,” said Mr. Sterling. “I have long been desirous that my niece should meet with some of her English relatives. You and Cathara are second cousins. I have been in this country forty odd years, and am such a poor sailor I have never been able to make up my mind to navigate again;” and he composed himself into a tranquil slumber, as though he would drown the thought of the sea in oblivion.

Astonley drew near Cathara. She questioned him of England, and he told her, in language fluent and choice, of the ancient castles, the strongholds of the Barons, the battle-fields, the legends, the whole land bristling with historic associations; the homes of the past, the homes of the present; the lawns, the bright parterres, that now made it the garden of the world. “But all this and more you have heard of often!”

“Read of,” replied Cathara; “but it is another thing to hear the living voice discourse of England, and I have never met with any of my mother’s countrymen.”

“You would enjoy living in England, I am sure. Are you never lonely here?”

“Not in the least; I have so much to do, the days are too short, and so beautiful.”

“And your teachers, where do you find them?”

“They come from Boston—my uncle prefers to

have me educated with English privacy, and he has spared no pains, my good indefatigable uncle, to induce them to domicile here."

"And you know nothing of this great, busy, bustling world, and are content without it?"

"And you know all of this busy, bustling world, and are content with it?"

And her look rested for a moment upon his face, variable and fitful as it was in its dark beauty.

"At present I am content as the angels"—a glance of delicate admiration at her giving point to his words, and his face, usually apathetic, now glowed with animation.

Here Mr. Sterling woke up again. "You sing, do you not, Norman? Your father used to sing a score of piping sea songs, that freshened my blood like a keen mountain breeze; one verse I remember," and he hummed with gusto—

"There's tempest in yon horned moon,
And lightning in yon cloud;
And, hark, the music mariners,
The wind is piping loud.

The wind is piping loud, my boys,
The lightning flashes free;
While the hollow oak our palace is,
Our heritage the sea.'

You sing, do you not? Be so good."

Astonley complied, seating himself at the piano. If the old gentleman missed the hearty, manly ring, which roused his pulses in bygone days, it was not to be denied that the singer's voice was a delicious tenor.

Cathara felt the rich strain assail her heart with an

almost insupportable feeling of langour ; it seemed oppressive in its intense sweetness. She changed her seat, drew near to and looked out of the window ; which she longed to throw open, to let in the pure cold breeze, which swept down from the long arcades of ice-cold, star-glittering, fathomless heavens.” When Astonley rose, Mr. Sterling called out,

“ Now, Cathara, try that dreadful solemn chant of yours, which always makes me think of death. I try, Norman, to have a good solemn time, thinking of death at least as often as once a week. Death, you know, is always snapping at us. I have for ever pitied that poor man in the English Reader who was going to have a good time at a feast, and was told to look up and see the sword, suspended over his head by a single hair. Sight to stop a man’s appetite very quick. But it is a solemn subject. Did you ever think, Norman, of the rattling skeleton you carry within that handsome flesh of yours ?—Come, Cathara,” and once more he settled himself comfortably, with a sense of having placed the young man’s mind in a proper, serious frame ; when, to his surprise, Norman laughed aloud.

“ You certainly have an odd way of putting things, uncle.”

“ Not in the least ; the subject of death is worthy of our most serious attention ; it is as old as the hills, and bids fair to outlive us all. Begin, Little Lady.”

Cathara and Astonley both smiled at this odd logic. Her cousin would have led her to the piano, but she passed it, and pausing before a harp,

“ This suits me best ;” and drawing her seat towards it, she began at once to wreath her slender fingers through a series of rich chords, out of whose sheathing harmony, her voice rose, at first, like a sigh, then a

prayer, at last an intense supplication. It was an ancient Ave Maria, with the aroma of a far-off century upon it,—strange, monkish, mystic, but inclining the soul heavenward. Astonley had never been so affected by an anthem.

“Such unearthly melodies as you invoke, my dear cousin, are absolutely startling. Where in the world did you light upon such a ghostly wail?”

“My German teacher gave it to me, as a treasure of ancient worship.”

“It sounds dreary, and reminds me of some of those German legends, which are brimful of goblins, gnomes, satyrs. Do you never sing modern music?”

“Sometimes; but it is time for me to be at the church now; are you ready, uncle?”

Her cousin sprang to wrap the fur cloak about her, and sought to fasten the silken ribbons of her hood under the chin; but she evaded his movement, and ran out to the sleigh, in which the three set forth, the merry bells pealing clear upon the still, frosty Christmas Eve.

CHAPTER IV.

A R T H U R .

ONE January morning, Cathara tapped gently upon her cousin's door.

“ May I come in, Arthur ? ”

“ Yes, but no one else ; ” and he did not open his eyes for a moment, or smile, but welcomed her by extending his slender, wasted hand.

“ Sit near me where I can look at you ; it wearies me so to see any one flitting about.”

With an air of gentleness and the exquisite grace of perfect composure, the young girl took her seat near him. In her hand she held a blue Thibet cover, upon which she was embroidering a wreath of acorn cups and leaves in white silk floss. The needle, as it pierced the fine material, left not the shadow of a sound. For a long time the invalid kept, in silence, the sweet hush her presence brought him ; then languidly opening his eyes, they perused every feature of Cathara’s face and attitude. A faint smile struggled to get loose as he spoke.

“ What taste you have, Sweet. Something about you always lifts me above mediocre contemplations. That blue cloth is fair as the sky, and the pattern like light clouds drifting over it.” Then changing the subject quickly : “ Early this morning I made my will, and left all I have to you, Cathara ; then I dismissed nurse,

physician, uncle ; they put me out of all conceit of living here, even if this miserable body could be put in repair. There is nothing perfect in this world ; some stain, some alloy, blends with every thing. I shall never be quite in state, and perfect on earth, until I am laid out in a well upholstered crypt. My nurse sings me a dolorous psalm, to beguile me of my sinful distempers—

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust,
As to the evil, so the just.

My life has become shadowy and unreal. It is like a cloudy day in summer. It wants the sun to animate every leaf into a winged jewel. My youth is turned to reflective age. At night, I live more in my dreams, than by day. I only float upon the dark stream, and ever, ever I say—Have pity—have pity upon me, so ruined and worthless ! Where were you before you came here ? ”

“ In the outer porch.”

“ This cold morning, what for ; and who was with you ? ”

“ My uncle, and my English cousin, Norman Astonley.”

“ Ah ! I heard a silvery tenor voice singing a few nights since. Is that the cousin ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ His voice was like the fragrance of an over-sweet flower, intoxicating, like Lulu Lee’s. Just such a melting tone ; when she spoke my name, every drop in my heart leaped at the sound. Do you like the English cousin ? Is he handsome ? ”

“ I like him ; he is handsome.”

“ What were you doing this cold, benumbing morning in the corridor ? ”

“ We were looking at a minute crystal, through a new and powerful lens, which my uncle has just received.”

“ What did it show ? ”

“ A mimic Mont Blanc, whose needles of silver shot up into glaciers, while the feathery edge of the flake explicated into a palace of ivory, decked with stalactites.”

“ You tell me fairy stories. What do you see from the window ? I have not looked out to-day.”

“ Oh, Arthur, God’s world is always beautiful ; it is man’s world alone which wears blight and desolation upon it. There is a snow storm,” she began, as she approached the window ; “ the branches of the trees are strewn with white coral ; the fences, walls and gates are mounted with copings and mouldings purer than Carrara marble. Myriads of elfs and spangled sylphs soar down from the upper air. It is a dream and vision of frost-flowers. An ocean of calm, benignant beauty, trance-like, passionless ; a rest, a hush, whitens the air with the pale strew of these crystal chalices.”

“ Would a resident of the tropics believe in such fairy glamour ? ” enquired Arthur, looking pleased ; “ and pray tell me, Cathara, where you got such a wealth of contentment as abides with you always ? ”

“ I have never been ill, you know, Arthur. I am not acquainted with sorrow, save as I suffer for you. I do not fear death. Sometimes in pleasant summer mornings, very early, before a bird was stirring, I have felt as if a spirit were brooding, like the Divine Presence, over the just waking world, and then with what joy I have said, no one can rob me of my heritage, which is to die and then to live immortal. For the

present is always uncertain ; this uncertainty you know is the bitter drop in life. No day but may have some arrow pointed at the life of those who are dear to us as our own souls."

" Cathara, I tell you," said her cousin, while a paler shadow passed slowly, like mist, over his features ; " Death is very, very mournful. You do not hear the breakers dashing against the bar of this mortal life, as I do ; it is an appalling thing to shelve off into Eternity."

" No, Arthur, it is a glorious boon to die. The body is only a hindrance to the spirit," throwing her arms tenderly around him, while the tears fell upon his face ; " Go to Calvary, sweet, mournful Calvary. There the Beloved of the Church bleeds and dies for you. See Him, bowed beneath the burden of a sick and sorrowing world ; surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. Go to Him, he calls you, ' Son, give me thine heart.' Can you resist that tender call ? Where will be the sting of death, when you long to be with Him, and what hath He not promised that is good, to those who seek Him ? I remember that He says, ' And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads ; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.' Is not death then a glorious gift, which enables us to attain to a more transcendent beauty ? Let us pray, love, suffer, and be resigned. Give me some token, Arthur, that shall make the heavens and earth still bright when you are gone ? "

Her pleading tone overcame him ; he drew from beneath the folds of his vest, the Ark of the Covenant, and raising it to his lips, he kissed it reverently.

CHAPTER V.

A Letter from Norman Astonley to his Sister in London.

DEAR EDITH :

You know I hate the country in the winter, and do not see any need of raving about the "leafy month" of June ; but here am I now, in the dead of January, atop of a lone hill, in a plain-looking mansion, with old oaks and firs as ancient as the flood, engirting the house. They toss their wizard arms imploringly aloft to heaven, as though they decried its vengeance. I was congealed with frost, and a terror of solitude, stagnation, and dearth of incident, as I approached this bleak summit. In it I find three interesting inmates ; a young man of the most extraordinary beauty, not more than twenty-three, Cathara's cousin, and he has lived much of his life with Mr. Sterling ; a boy, whose heart, like Byron's hero, "has far outgrown his years," and who, thwarted of life, I cannot quite make out how, is dying day by day. Here lives Mr. Sterling, our great uncle. Calculating how many bushels of wheat his farm will yield to the acre. Importing foreign cattle and showing them off at the agricultural fairs. Distributing potatoes and corn by the gross to poor people. A sturdy, hale old gentleman, lively, and humming the English sea songs, which he heard trolled in his youth, and which, to him, are as

redolent of patriotism as bastions and citadels. Perfectly devoted to his niece and his microscope, and happy as a curious child, in exploring the secrets which the latter reveals. Lastly, his niece, a young girl about nineteen, our second cousin, Cathara Clyde. She is in love with birds, flowers, mountains, sun and moon. Everything in nature seems to her like some eloquent problem, to be solved into religion or poetry. She has seen but little society, and yet she is as refined and self-possessed as possible. I think her perfect manners arise from her subtle intuitions,—you women are the deuce with your intuitions,—and from her passionate love for study, and the arts, which have been fostered to an unusual degree. All this I have found on this New England peak ; but I have lost my heart to this Alpine flower, whose lovelinesss is of a rare type ; and it is, I assure you, a complete surrender of every feeling and thought. It has even made me see a beauty in the haggard trees and deserts of snow which surround us. At least I feel contented ; especially as the residence which Mr. Sterling has been building for the last three years in Boston, is just finished and furnished, and to it we make our flight the last of this month. I have lost more than two years since I first visited this country ; but I may thank you that I did not leave Boston again without seeing Cathara.

Please find out all about her mother's relations. I can foresee that it may prove a tie between us.

Your devoted Brother,
NORMAN.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PROPOSAL.

“ My dear child,” said Mr. Sterling, one morning, to his niece, just after they had risen from the breakfast-table, “ come into the library with me. There, close the door fast, and sit down. I want to talk with you about Norman ; he has made proposals to me for your hand ; he loves you ; who could help it, little lady, and, Cathara, I want you to accept him.”

“ Oh ! no, uncle.”

“ Wait a little, until I set before you my reasons. I find, in spite of my untiring obedience to physical laws, that even oxygen will not serve this tenement as a home for the soul for ever. I recognise in all the great rules, mental, moral, and physical, which govern our being, the virtue of a superior law maker ; and I resign myself to his care. It is true, this shell of mine appears to be in good order. My lungs, I am sure, are sound, and every muscle supple ; but the brain is too fond of sleeping, I think ; and, therefore, in pressing you to accept your cousin, I should feel that you would not be alone, when I am gone. And, beside, I want you to marry an Englishman, to go back to England, take the fortune which I shall leave you, and make your future home in England. Think how few opportunities will offer for you to marry one of your mother’s country-

men ; and Norman, I am sure, is accomplished and handsome enough to please the daintiest woman, and very much in love with you. Let me constrain you, my dear child. Indeed, it seems quite providential that he should have come here. Do you not see it so ? And will you not let me give him a favorable answer ? ”

“ I cannot accept my cousin Norman,” said Cathara, looking clear and straight at her uncle ; “ I know not how to explain it, but handsome and agreeable and intelligent as he is, and much as I admire him, he so often disappoints me, some link is wanting between our two natures. He would not make my happiness, how could I then make his ? Believe me, dear uncle, we are far better apart ; indeed, I do not mind it, if I have to walk alone in the world. The world is so beautiful to me ; and we are alone, no matter how many are with us, if they do not belong to us by an inner similitude ; are we not, dear uncle ? ”

“ Young, ardent child,” said her uncle, “ may God make your faith serve unto you as a companion,” and he laid his hand reverently upon her pure brow ; “ but you do not know what it means, yet, to be alone in the world. Make me a promise, then, that you will not marry any one else within a year, and that you will permit Astonley to visit you, as a cousin, without constraint and ceremony.”

“ As to the first clause of your stipulation,” said the young girl, smiling, “ that is easy enough ; as to the last, I am afraid that it will not be wise, but I yield the point, in accordance with your wish.”

“ I have no doubt but that he will win you, before the term has expired ; and now, I will dismiss all further anxiety, my good, dear little lady. You have always

been the joy and delight of your old uncle's eyes, ever since your fair young mother died, and left you an orphan in a strange land. But do not let us cry ; I never did like to shed tears :" and changing the subject abruptly, as he looked out of the window.

" Ah ! there is our good friend, Dr. Fairfax ; will you take him to see Arthur, while I talk with Norman."

Cathara vanished ; and Astonley entered, obedient to the summons. The old gentleman launched at once into the middle of the subject.

" The truth is, Norman, Cathara is as innocent as a dove, and does not know what love means ; but she is young, and you will see so much of her, in the future, that with your attractions, it is impossible to fail, and you an Englishman, too ! "

The haughty, handsome man shrugged his shoulders for a moment, with an air of superb chagrin.

" I have never yet seen the woman who would not sue for my affection, only give me a fair chance ; she is so absorbed in her cousin, that I prefer not to press my suit."

" Just so, just so ; we will wait—but I must speak to Dr. Fairfax. I hear him. Call him in, Norman."

As the young man went out, the physician entered.

" How do you find your patient ? " inquired Mr. Sterling.

" My good sir," replied the Doctor, solemnly, " the brunt of life is over for him."

" Oh ! no—why could not I have gone in his place ? Does Cathara know it ? "

" Yes,— " a long silence, during which Dr. Fairfax ~~steal~~ noiselessly out, and Mr. Sterling fell into a deep

slumber, during which his spirit also got emancipated from its earthly tenement, and Cathara was deprived of her dearest friends and only relations in New England, except her second cousin, Norman Astonley.

CHAPTER VII.

INCIDENTS.

“Griefs which lie in the heart like treasures,
Till time has turned them to solemn pleasures.”

OUT of the season of mourning, Cathara's heart beat higher in her bosom. Life was of more surpassing value, held more untold sweetness. A secret ambition enlivened each moment. She felt herself responsible for the use of the talent which God had given her, to cultivate her art and to help others to profit by her own attainments. So she held on to her determination to plant beautiful and serene life wherever she could ; let who would laugh at her dream. “I also will work,” throbbed in her veins, with a sense of spiritual independence. It charged her faculties with clairvoyance. The world was like a globe of light—the heavens clear as crystal. The hours leaped along youth's golden ecliptic, blessedly brief. “Oh ! for something great and good and useful to do,” she cried. “It is the faithful patient miner, whose hand, with reiterated stroke, brings forth the ore. I will hold tryst with the early dawn, that I may have more time to make supple the intellectual muscles—to extort from study and composition some hidden power. Shall I not spend as much time in loosening the bands which coil about the brain, as the rope and ballet dancer, to give wings to

flesh ? May my right hand forget her cunning, my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I do not strive to find if any good lies buried within me. It shall well up like the deep heavings of the sea,"—and thus she spurred on her intentions, although she knew the pleasures of lying soft and warm, and late and long, and could have drugged the hours with rosy wine, and floated like a lotus eater, dreaming, down life's glassy river. She knew little of society. She loved her kind. She longed to study human nature, she craved to feel the ennobling influence of others over herself, and she longed to know her own over others.

Sweet and dangerous longings. Few come out of the social fire, unscathed, after this mixing and commingling of spirits. Who can resist the masterly one ; tyrant and heretic though it be.

Alone, untrammelled, she walked about her new home. It was beautiful to the young girl as an Arabian story. Invitation lay in the broad flight of stone steps. The wide, tessellated hall, affected her as Babylonian, with its odd blue stone, mystic lines, and inlaid tablets of wise-looking birds. The drawing-room, how silent ! how spacious ! how full of repose ! It was not a gaudy place—not plethoric of furniture. There was luxury, yet not an overflowing cup. Surfeit withheld. Moderation, that was grace in itself—no chandelier spoiled and broke the space. Stems and flowers of lilies, pale as pearl, each calyx illumined with its drop of fire, sprang from the soft sea-blue colored frescoes upon the wall. Large standards draped in sea-blue velvet, sustained life-size figures in marble of Hope, Sleep, the glorious Day, the veiled Night. No painting marred the chaste effect, only a few vases of quaint and original conceit, were interspersed upon brackets of porcelain.

Between the long windows, secluded in hangings of silk and clouds of lace, stood a harp. Beautiful, as it ever must be, in form, and suggestive of Heaven.

In the library, enshrined in alcoves of ebony, dead Christendom was alive and persuasive, and speaking in as many tongues as those cloven fiery ones that fell down upon Pentecost day.

Cathara said she liked to have good company at meal time, and hence the dining-room glowed with fair ideal images. And young children, playful as elves, sported among flowers, or by the dimpling waters led the snow-white lambs. St. Cecilia's seraph head and inspired hand,—the angel of the Annunciation,—the lit brow of St. John in the isle of Patmos, and many others. But no scenes of battle or carnage. No pendant bird with the red stain oozing from the deep gun-wound in its breast. No dying gladiator sinking into inglorious death. No tiger springing at the throat of horse and rider. No serpent rearing its hateful crest to wind its monstrous folds about its victim. No wounded dove struck down by the cruel hawk. Beyond this apartment lay the winter conservatory, now devoid of plants, but covered with upspringing vines, where shoots and tendrils made it a nest of leafy buds, whose close-woven masses formed a quiet haunt of shadow and gleam. Into the trumpet-flowers which hung from the creepers, the coquettish humming-bird pierced with tapering beak, and cradled his jewelled wing in the heart of the prairie roses, that mingled their sweetness with fragrant honeysuckles, while the honey-bee, in black velvet jerkin and yellow breeches, like a valet in livery, gathered poetic condiment to be distilled upon the tongue of man, the epicure.

The rulers in the fashionable synagogues inquired,

discussed, and made known Miss Clyde's antecedents and present belongings. These being pronounced without a blot, not only intact, but interesting, namely : of good English parentage, an orphan, young, beautiful, accomplished, wealthy ; ~~Mrs.~~ Patrician Mogul called ; in her wake came an eager throng of fashionable dames and demoiselles, amateurs, fortune-hunters, artists, authors, clergymen. Society stood at flood-tide at her doors. Sanguine, her mind filled with a thousand ardent hopes, it seemed as if the world were keeping some high ~~ju~~bilee for her. Her smile was almost seraphic in its sweetness, receiving each new comer as if they were laden with an argosy of worth. Their elegant manners she thought the symbol of the beautiful soul within : their exquisite taste, the veil of pure thoughts and artistic fancy. The glance stole out of the dark night of her eyes and rested upon them, full of wistful pathos, and the grace of her own nature, curious to behold this new world—this El Dorado. Cathara's entire *abandon* and naturalness, which is, after all, the secret of success in society—for even beauty will tire without it—proved a constant magnet to attract, and fashion's gay circle spun round her like a golden top. She puzzled, amused, and inspired, by her high behavior and wit. In a short period she won an incredible amount of oral biography from men and women. At length the mask fell. She began to look upon this gilded confederacy as a band of sick people ; this kingdom of serenity and smiles as a very ocean of unrest.

She was almost sorry to be so soon disenchanted ; sorry that she had penetrated beyond the alluring draperies, the costly investitures, the high breeding and assumed cheerfulness, to find such consuming melan-

choly, dead flatness, weariness, lassitude, disgust, discontent, rivalry, hatred. Was all this polished fraternity but a glittering fable? Cathara felt that she was well-nigh losing the tranquillity that she had brought with her from her mountain home, and becoming entangled in a wilderness of burrs, nettles, and verbiage. She became weary of this constant plaint, of the unsatisfactory nature of life. She was afraid of being infected with the distemper; afraid, lest, unawares, she too should find this burden, which, like Christian's pack, weighed so remorselessly upon their spirits. To escape from the yoke she changed her manners; became wilful, lofty, unapproachable. She repelled all interference with her hours and pursuits; left letters unopened; ignored friendships; gave curt replies to complimentary proposals of alliance.

One morning after breakfast she pondered upon all these things, walking up and down the breakfast room. "I have got my experience," she thought; "but it shall not be like the east wind, which chills. This morning my dear friend, Mrs. Mogul, writes me, that I will go through the wood, and take up with a crooked stick at last, if I decline the offers of that divine Mr. Simple, who would surround my steps with a periphery of diamonds. Bah! The jewels of the morning, which still sparkle upon the flowers he sends me, these tears of the night, have some sentiment in their liquid spheres. I love flowers, but I almost hate these, because he was so audacious as to send them. Here goes my reply." And sitting down at the table, she wrote a tiny billet, enclosed and despatched it by her footman. Once more she resumed her walk and her thoughts: "My reply was elegant phrase conserved in ice, expressive of the immense honor, &c. To

see that rose-pink knight of the carpet, valorous in prodigies of onset upon cologne bottles, antic with fans, mincing his steps, and lisping insipidity, ought to make me fall down and plight my troth unchangeably at the feet of the plain, the homespun, the simple, the severe. I go out of doors; I pluck a handful of pretty weeds or tasselled grass, a sense of beauty comes over me; I look up to the sky and smile. I am at my ease and whole again. But what a dreary vacuity seizes upon me, when in this man's presence. I will walk alone in the world,—alone to the end of the chapter.—

'Is no brain strong, whole, happy, self-contained?' "

The young girl approached the long French window, and, half hid by the draperies, leaned out. It was a perfect summer morning. An African boy was passing by, whistling, happy as a blackbird trilling upon a fragrant bough. Supple creature, he turns a somerset by way of uncoiling some of his fun. He rolls in the hot sun. He is sooty, choked by vile chimney-dust, but his spirits are not begrimed by ennui. He looks up at the window—spies the beautiful head peeping out at him, and gives a broad, naive, hearty grin, showing a circle of ivory, that a king of bad digestion might envy. The quirk in his face is irresistible. She laughs, and is about to fling some coin to him. No; don't remind a man of specie, who is poor, a philosopher, and happy. But something she must do, to compensate him for the healthy shock he has given her. She seizes the fresh, costly bouquet, and tosses it out to him. It showers him with morning dew. It is a surprise. What's so charming as a surprise? Such flowers require a tropic eye to enjoy. He pulls his ragged cap by way of thanks, and says:

“Ha, ha, little posy too good for poor chimney-sweep.” And as he waves it above his head, he sets up his lusty, thrilling cry. His vigorous roundelay is wild, unwritten music.

Did you ever think, listener, that there was a dash of tears in his improvised ballad?

The bell sounds. The waiter has cut his finger. It is too early for a fashionable visit. He despatches Rosette, the French maid. She opens the door; sees a bald-headed man, in glasses, with white neckcloth, and clad in seedy black; thinks he is a gentleman, and, not knowing what to do with him, shows him into the breakfast room, and looks frightened when she sees her mistress, who is usually in her painting room at this hour.

“Are you the lady of the house, Miss?”

“Yes; what do you wish, sir?”

“I wish,” he said, drawing a chair, dusting it, and sitting down very deliberately; for the chair was small and he was large; “I wish,” he replied, taking off his spectacles, polishing them assiduously, then holding them before his eyes, “it is very important that no particles of dust should intercept my view. My eyes are weak, Miss; perhaps yours may be some day, and then take care and keep your spectacles clear.” Cathara bit her lips, and made a little gesture of impatience.

“I wish to introduce myself as the agent (Mr. Samuel Bullock, at your service),” handing her a card, which, as she did not choose to advance and take, he kept tilting on his fingers. “I wish to inform you, that I am an agent for the sale of a new cook-book, by my friend, Mrs. O’Friar. She is, Miss, a woman, who is always, if I may use the term, (my organ of comparison stands 7, Miss, the highest number that Fowler

gives)—she is always in the frying-pan of good works. She has, at a great deal of trouble and cost, got together this choice little museum of receipts; nicely bound, you see; have your choice; blue or red; wouldn't look bad on your parlor centre-table."

Here Cathara warned him off, with an air so imperative, as she turned and rang the bell, that it brought the pedlar to his feet, and to a more rapid articulation, as he screamed—

"I am going; you needn't call your lackey: you'll lose a chance to do good that you'll regret to your dying day. I am a missionary; the avails of this sale are to go to build up an institution, which,—well, I'm going; but I can tell you what you need, for I am a missionary, you need sorrow and affliction, to bring you off your high horse. You've got to die, and take off all your fine furbelows, like the rest of us."

The polite waiter ushered him out, with such an air of complete extinguishment, as quite dumbfounded Mrs. O'Friar's agent.

Cathara went back to the window, and repeated—

"Perhaps it may turn out a song,
Perhaps turn out a sermon."

"I ought to have sent a douceur after the man, for he reminds me 'that there is a great deal of human nature in the world,' a fact which we are apt to forget. But who comes here?" she thought, leaning further out of the window. "It is the saddest face I ever saw—sable black, literally clad in mourning, never to be white on earth—and hence a doomed man. I will make that man happy if I can."

Swift as thought she crosses the hall, opens the door, and flies down. The flutter of her white, streaming morning robe makes the black pilgrim look up; he

thinks it is a cloud or an angel falling. The young girl stops him.

"Sir, will you do me the favor to take this?" pressing a fifty-dollar note into his hand. *more money*

"Why, I am not a beggar; I am a black preacher."

"It is not for you," she said, smiling like a sweet child. "It is for charity's sake."

"Why, how did you know that was the name of my wife, and she is sick?" and the black man was half comforted, as he smiled and passed on.

Before Cathara had finished nodding her head in joyful acquiescence to his interpretation, her ear was assailed by a clatter and mad dash of horses in the street. They overturned a carriage just as they passed her door, broke loose from it, and plunged fiercely on. A young officer, going by, rescued an insensible girl as she was thrown from the low chariot and cast down upon the curb-stone. He raised her in his arms, and seeing Cathara standing upon the steps and the door open, carried the unconscious girl into the breakfast-room, and laid her upon the divan. While he ran for a surgeon, Cathara sprinkled the lady's face with water. There was no injury, and the soft color was flowing back to her cheek.

She still retained her handkerchief, its beautiful embroidery spread out; and in one corner, in threads of blue, Cathara read, as if stung, the name of "Lulu Lee."

Then Cathara gazed upon the siren, and her heart died within her, as she looked upon the effluence of witching beauty that diffused itself over her softly brilliant face. The eyes beautifully moulded—the long, fine, silken fringes drooping like a tender shadow. Fine straight brows; a low white forehead; satin brown hair wound round her head, symmetrical with grace, as the antique head which gemmed her bracelet; the

nose straight, and finely polished about the nostrils ; the short upper lip curved into haughty waywardness—the lower, crimson, full, and melting away in sweetness. The superb *pose* of the entire figure, in its unconscious attitude, struck and enchanted Cathara, who recoiled from appearing like a Nemesis, to avenge her cousin's wrongs—yet there was her promise. At this instant Lulu Lee raised herself, graceful and light as a flower, and shook perfume from the innumerable folds of her rose-colored dress, as quite secure from disarray, she said, in a sweet, nonchalant tone, her decoying eyes looking like gems burning from cloudy depths—

“ I believe no bones are broken, although I was tossed like a ball upon the curb-stone. Those audacious, mad, plunging horses gave me the most practical idea I ever yet had of a whirlwind. I forgive them. The torrent of sensation that tore through my heart, as I saw them go, reckless in their savage power, was glorious, and kindred to the wild impetuosity of my own uncurbed nature.”

Here her eye fell upon a miniature of Arthur Clyde, that Cathara wore as a pin upon her bosom. The light of her keen look flickered, then grew coquettishly triumphant.

“ You recognize this likeness,” said Cathara, in a low, still tone.”

“ Yes ; what has become of him ? ”

“ He died.”

“ What occasioned his death ? ” inquired Lulu.

“ He died of a broken heart, a broken spirit, and a broken vow.”

Her auditress never winced the least. If she felt the words, she had trained herself too thoroughly ever to be betrayed by any emotion.

"What a head he had!" she went on, easily, to reply; "cast in a genuine mould of the handsome Greek; and such a fancy—but marvellously lacking in discrimination. Don't you think so?"

Without waiting for a reply, she turned to the young officer, who entered with the surgeon.

"I am sorry to have troubled you, sir," bowing airily to the man of science. "Misfortune tried to get a fling at me; but it was of no use—I am invulnerable; and now, fair lady, will your servant order a carriage to convey me home."

"It is in waiting," said the young officer, who had already called one from a stand in passing.

"I bid you good-morning. My gratitude is boundless," and, bowing low over Cathara's hand, she skimmed the floor lightly.

"My fan, my precious fan—I've dropped it; it contains an amulet I am superstitious about. Please see if it is not on the sofa."

And once more the officer returned in quest of the fan. It lay upon the floor—the gentleman raised it; then bending low before Cathara, he apologized for this second intrusion. She was compelled to look at him. He had a plain face, a little sharpness in the angles, light waving locks; but what spirit in the turn of the head! what penetration flashed out of the deep, clear eyes! His tall, slender figure, how haughtily beautiful! His voice was finely toned, and sympathetic. His "good-morning," Cathara fancied lingered in the room, as if the walls were pleased to echo it again.

"Oh! this precious fan is too priceless to be replaced, and yet you see it is ugly enough," said Lulu, taking it from him; "and now please tell me if you

saw this memorable occurrence, and how it happened."

By the time the recapitulation was ended, Lulu Lee signified that they were at her mother's house.

"Ma has a reception on the day after to-morrow, from nine in the evening until twelve. Will you come, that she may thank my preserver, whose name I do not know?" and she smiled archly.

"Pierre Bayard," he said quickly, and then added, "I regret that I cannot come. I am going into the country on that day," and he was gone before she could add another word.

"For once I have failed to throw a noose over a man's fancy," she soliloquized; "had he but given me twenty minutes more, he would not have unmoored so easily; but I forget that he has seen a goddess this morning. What a brow she had! and I—well, I am nothing but a poor little coquette, whose life was scarce worth preserving."

"Now, ma, don't faint, and go off into a series of hysterics, and I'll tell you something," on entering the drawing-room.

"Well, child. Is it about the dress?"

"No, ma. The carriage was overturned, and the horses have dashed themselves to pieces. I have been brought home by a plain man, yet he has turned my head with his air."

"His hair? how wild you talk! Where are the horses?"

"His air, ma, his air—so grand and distingué," screamed Lulu, laughing.

"But the horses?"

"Gambolling about the streets, assuming attitudes suggestive of Aurora coming in of a morning, or Mr. Phebus four in hand."

“When will you ever talk rationally?”

“Not until I can get his air out of my head, and heaven knows when I shall get another such an airing.”

“Lulu, your airs are quite insufferable.”

“Positively, ma is really witty for once, without being in the least aware of it, however,” she murmured to herself, as she glided out of the door, and quickly surmounting the richly carpeted staircase, she swept through her chamber, letting fall upon the floor, by the way, her costly wrought India muslin mantle; the elegant bonnet of fair white crape; her gloves and bracelets; shaking them off with a disdainful air as paltry rubbish, which her obsequious maid who followed in her wake, could care for or not, as she chose. She unclosed the door of a private room, hidden under a silken curtain, and locking it, she sank into an embrasure of blue satin billows of down; resting her fawn-colored taper boots upon an ottoman, she strewed the contents of a perfume casket over her.

“I can always think better when my brain is stimulated with some rare scent,” ran her reverie; and now for that Arthur Clyde—“Where’s the list of the cubs,” stretching out her hand and taking a manuscript book from a drawer, and turning over the leaves, “What year was it that he swore he loved me so?”

“Ah! yes, I have it; two years since. Here, he is entered: ‘Arthur Clyde, a suppliant Apollo; one of the handsomest of the cubs, allows one to quiz him in an extraordinary manner; unfortunately for him, he believes what I say, and does not touch my heart.’ Such is the record made there, and not one of my knights ever has touched my heart; they seem to be vastly ignorant of physiology. A man is an ape to die

for a woman ; certain it is, I can't afford to weep over all my disappointed suitors. Heigho ! I wonder who will come next on the list ? ” Throwing it back in the drawer, and closing her eyes, the Circe slept ; the most exquisitely beautiful picture in the world, of a graceful woman, half recumbent, imbathed in rosy sleep.

Keen must be the eyes that see the Fates scenting for their prey ; yet they are there, although looking sadly askance, as though seized upon with a soft plea of mercy.

Pierre Bayard dismissed the coachman, and once more turned his steps toward that portion of the town where the morning's adventure had arrested him. Slowly he lingered upon the pavement as he approached Cathara's house ; gazed at the elaborate workmanship and the architecture of the door ; the mouldings about the long windows ; all the time recalling her face. He would not for the world, have had one feature grow misty to his memory, for its loveliness had affected his mind with a strange rapture. “ Oh ! earth, thou art not fair enough for such as she—and here I swear a covenant to keep my heart for ever loyal to those starry eyes.”

And while a hundred mad, delicious fancies danced in his veins like electricity, and he was longing for some generous deed to do to serve *her*, he saw a carriage pause at the door, from whence a gentleman alighted, and was shown in, *sans cérémonie*.

A jealous bolt shivered his fine air-castle, as he asked himself, “ Where did that Adonis drop from ? Dark, smooth features, chisseled, voluptuous, classic, high breeding, aristocratic expression. Is he her *fiancé*, or perhaps married ? ” And in the midst of the glowing morning, while the sun rode hot to the zenith, and

the fair earth looked strong to bud for ever ; he felt as if some cold, insurgent wave, had shipwrecked him upon an unknown shore, and left him, faint and sick at heart. This superconsciousness of mysterious life, that mounts upward, then fades and dies ; this spirit that cometh, we know not whence, and goeth, we know not whither ; assailed him in the gay noontide ; but he walked on, mechanically bowing to his acquaintances, just the same as he was wont to do in plain, unmarked days. He arrives at his quarters, a sergeant comes up to him to submit an order. After a time, matter and spirit begin to coalesce again. Blessed be the ministries, the sciences, the professions, the home duties, the physical needs, that tie down the soul firm to its earthly anchorage, or, He, alone, who made us, knows what we should suffer.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SCHEME.

NORMAN ASTONLEY was not the first man who had vowed to himself to marry the woman upon whom he had set his heart, at all risks, hazards, and ventures, either for time or for eternity. When a man gets encompassed by a thought, woe be to him if it be an evil one ; blessings betide him and his race if it be a good. For there is no power like this brain power, and a purpose once fixed upon.

With what an air of high breeding Norman enters his cousin's mansion and crosses the tessellated hall, and passes on through the suite of beautifully-appointed apartments ! He feels at home in a drawing-room ; its richly enclosed spaces, its luxury-breathing environs, are sympathetic and suggestive to him. His face, usually but an exceedingly handsome mask, now dawns into a singular splendor, as he approaches to meet his cousin, lingering a little to watch her beautiful steps, which stir, like music, the morning robe of her full flowing India muslin, clear and light as air. The young girl felt the magic of his consummate flattery of manner, and his wonderful beauty. It held her eyes to gaze upon him, to admire him, and yet, despite of all, to feel, again and again, disappointed, just as she had many times before.

“ Cathara, if yours were not a loveliness so pecu-

liarly entralling, I should call you cold, cold as ice," he said, in an impassioned whisper, as he led her to a seat, and drew one beside her.

"Never mind, do not let us talk of ourselves to-night, cousin; at least, with reference to each other."

With a good deal of self-denial, Astonley changed the subject which trembled upon his tongue.

"Well then, cousin, I will obey you. You are like Mount Blanc—your foot is upon the earth, but your head is in the clouds. Will no amount of devotion serve to melt away these glaciers?" said Astonley, bending near her, with a glance from his brilliant eyes that might easily have flattered most women.

"Oh, fie, cousin! I do not like to be importuned upon this subject. It should be with a happy, spontaneous acceptance that a woman listens to her lover. To have it wrung, tortured, compelled from her, is unnatural, ungenerous, unlovely."

"Then half the happy marriages that now exist would be blotted out. Women are such chameleons in fancy they must be wooed into a decision, and after marriage their affectionate natures grow into the very being of their husbands. Would you live on unloved forever?"

"I am happy now, and neither know nor feel the want of this imperious love. I am young; pray let me live out my own life. Give me pure, unprofaned delight in nature, and I will leave to you the feverish pleasures."

"Sweet cousin," said Astonley, taking her hand with a graceful gesture of endearment, "think how I suffer when I see you surrounded by flatterers, followed by admirers, some one of whom may steal my idol from

me. Let me be your slave, put your foot upon me, but never send me away from you quite hopeless."

"I am sadly weary," replied Cathara, rising with an air of listless indifference. "I can never make you understand me. I must bid you good-morning."

"Stay," cried Astonley, detaining her; "I will not offend you again. I came to talk with you about other matters, when your presence absorbed all my thoughts."

"Take care—no more incense, or I am gone," and Cathara half rose.

"Implacable, cruel, angry at me, because I cannot help loving you. Well, don't put such a distance between us; if I am to speak to you, there is no harm in touching the edge of your robe. I do not suppose you have missed me these four days; yet I have been to the sea-shore to look at my uncle's legacy. You know he willed me a certain old mansion, built by an ancient chum of his, with whom he sailed some voyages when a young man. The codicil runs thus—shall I read it to you?"

Cathara assented with a gesture.

"I, William Sterling, give and bequeath to Norman Astonley a stone mansion, situated upon the Jersey sea-shore. I give it to him, because he has a love for yachting. It is a manly sport, and one which I followed with infinite zest in my younger days. I have never seen and know nothing about the place."

"And you have actually been to that kingdom by the sea?" said Cathara, at once interested.

"Yes; since I saw you I have set a sail and plied an oar upon the ocean's dancing brine. I have visited the mansion: it is called 'The Captain's Chateau' by the coasters. It is a curious, commodious structure.

I have invited my sister, Mrs. Vail, to come over and pass the summer with me there. She has replied, and will arrive in August. You too, Cathara, will be my guest, will you not? My sister was a playmate of your mother's, Cathara."

" You tempt me, Norman. It shall be conditionally, then."

" Do not, sweet cousin, be so self-possessed, prudent, and pitiless, as to impose conditions. I shall claim your promise, and leave you; for I see you are looking pale this morning. *Au revoir.*"

As soon as Astonley was gone, the young girl sped up the staircase, and entered her boudoir, having previously given orders that no one should be admitted, and that neither cards nor notes should be brought to her until she chose to ring for an attendant. She unloosed the blue girdle which confined her robe, and leaned, with graceful abandon, upon the rose-satin pillows, sheathed in lace, which covered the divan, and thus her thoughts ran! *ah! ah!*

" Norman does not rate a woman's nature high; he thinks her heart but a piece of mechanism after all; he believes that it can be wound up and made to go by a series of attentions. He does not look for the soul to leap up to the eye, and burn at his presence; nor for those cordial smiles and candid words that fall from the lips like fragrant flowers. He must rush on, exorbitant, and blind as a stone. I love *her*—that is enough for the vulgar soul. I have been just so devoted to you, now I am entitled to just so much of your affection. It is a kind of bargain, a bond of habit, a traffic in courteous attentions, they will persist in forcing upon you.

“But, in truth, I have seen this morning the only really chivalric impersonation that ever crossed my path. I am glad I did not meet him in the routine of society—society dwarfs people so—each seems afraid of his neighbor. To float upon the surface, is their alpha and omega ; emotion is out of place—feeling bad taste. May he be a perpetual stranger, if he is to descend one whit lower in the scale of my estimation. The air blows in pleasantly at the window, and yet I feel smothered ; for I am thinking of that clean, green moss bank at the foot of the butternut-tree, where I used to rest when I was a child. Then the breeze came blowing over the tall, bending grass and nodding clover heads. It stirred my hair, just like a spirit. There is spirit in wind. And the music of the mill-wheel, and the sound of the dripping water, was full of indefinite sweetness ; and above all hung clouds, rolling their pure burden aloft upon the infinite blue, white and glittering as the saintly robes of the blest.” Her thoughts were interrupted by the musical clock singing out the hour.

The young girl sprang up and rang the bell. Rosette appeared, with an exquisite basket of Sevres porcelain in her hand, filled with mignonette and large rose-buds of every hue. Cathara bent over it, admiringly, for a moment, then seeing a hidden note, she opened and read—

“Lulu Lee begs Miss Clyde’s acceptance,” &c.—She read no more, but rent the paper, and showered it down upon the floor.

“Take away the flowers ; there are asps in them.”

“Where shall I take them ? ” said the bewildered maid.

"To your own room, if you like, and return at once."

Rosette bore off the basket. "I see no asps," peering among the flowers; "only buds. Will they poison me? There is not a single insect among them." As she ran back, she decided that it was a whim.

CHAPTER IX.

THE RECEPTION.

“SEYMOUR, my good fellow! How are you this morning, and whither does that portmanteau tend?” inquired Pierre Bayard, as he joined a friend in the street one morning, a few days after the events we have narrated in our last chapter.

“It tends to the country, Pierre, whither I am bound. Every man to his craft. We landscape copyists must weave our picture’s romance out of lakes, sunbeams, skies, and woods. I shoulder my pack for the Adirondacks, this season. I must get the trick of those grand shadows, which trail, like priestesses, or fitful spectres, over the old mountains. I want to tone in olive-colored clouds, silver moonlight, and gray mist; to have a brush at black firs, blue gorges, and—”

“Speed you on, then; I cannot confer with a man whose head is framed so high in the clouds. I would rather be an eagle and fly straight to the sun. I thought, perchance, you could help me plume my wings.”

“What on earth do you mean?”

“Ah! now you are on the earth; pray, can you tell me the name of the bright lady who lives in yonder house, on the opposite corner?”

“Of course I can; Miss Clyde, a lady who is the artist’s friend. Is *she* your luminary?”

“Yes. Are you acquainted with her ?”

“I have the honor, and also the advantage over you there, I believe, for her heart beats for just such poor, improvident, thriftless, day-dreaming waifs, as we artists generally are. She don’t like the soldier business. Your cannonading will be of no avail ; but if, under such discouragements, you will wait until I put down this portmanteau, I will take you there this very morning ; it is her day for reception, or rather it *was* ; at any rate, I have a sketch, a kind of P. P. C., I have made for her ; for she has given me a commission to paint a landscape for her. Wait, I will leave this at the chemist’s here.”

A moment, and Seymour rejoined his friend.

“And pray, after all, who is Miss Clyde ?”

“Well, Pierre, I forgive your ignorance. You are, I know, but just come from the land of the halfbreeds ; by the way, Sault de Ste Marié is a picturesque port, is it not ?”

“Enough so ; but the Lady ?”

“Here we are,” springing up the broad stone steps and ringing the bell ; “and you must wait for history.” A servant appeared and ushered them in, where a coterie of gentlemen were assembled in the library.

Their faces were expressive of every stage of impatience, chagrin, vexation, and an anticipation, which chained them to their seats.

Now and then a new-comer would be ushered in among the sulky number, and after exhausting his resources of conversation and patient waiting, would also take refuge in the pages of a magazine, or review, or some book selected from the ample niches ; or while away another half hour, in looking over the portfolios of rare engravings, placed upon various standards, and classified according to their age, style, and character.

"How long have you been in attendance?" asked one of the newly arrived, of Mr. Carlton.

"Two mortal hours, and I swear, for no other woman under the broad canopy, would I wait two minutes. What a pack of fools we are!"

"Fools?" exclaimed Bayard, feeling an unaccountable spur to take up the gauntlet; "to see her once, is an inspiration for a lifetime." ~~and the reader~~

"Beauty governs the world," said the artist, "or we should not be lingering here this morning, her worshippers; her slaves, if she would permit us to fetch and carry for her."

"She is indifferent enough to all our attractions, and not the least whit in love with any of us," began Carlton again, who was provoked that she should have such power over his stubborn nature. "She is, no doubt, as cold as ice."

"Like roses and lilies encrusted with snow," said Seymour, provokingly.

"But if she is not in love with any of us, it leaves us all a chance," added another; "and perchance this is the magnet—the hope that she may regard one of us complacently."

"She ignores a solitary visitor," said Carlton, "unless it be one of her own sex; and therefore there is no opportunity for making one's self fascinating; talking sentiment in the presence of forty others, would indeed be a rare piece of temerity. "Is she not intensely romantic?" inquired he of Seymour, with a sneer.

"I should judge that she was romantic in character and taste," he replied; "in manner as simple as a child."

"Not a bit of a coquette either?" said Carlton, still more satirically.

“No,” replied Bayard, pushed on to sustain her by his intuitions. “She is beautiful and fascinating—she feels her power over others, and that power, who can estimate its delight, save those thus dangerously gifted? The actor is inspired by it. The ambitious man toils for it. The orator claims it as his right. The poet sings for it; the clergyman enjoys it. All roll it under the tongue as one of the sweetest morsels earth provides.

“My friend, truly you wax eloquent; but show me a beautiful woman who is not a coquette,” said Carlton, looking about with the air of one skilled in experiences.

Once more Bayard followed out his impulse to defend her.

“Is a woman to suppose that every man who is courteous, is in love with her? And suppose he does love her, and declares it, and she refuses his proffered hand, will he not, ten to one, and let what may betide, still continue to flutter about the pretty, delusive, glittering enchantress, who has first taught him, poor hopeless wight, that he, too, has a heart? Once it lay like a clod in his bosom, now the narrow walls of his soul have crumbled, and he lives in a boundless world. He has become a poet. Even the most matter-of-fact beings love to sing and soar, if one can be found to lend them wings wherewith to mount. And then, miserable ingrates, because a woman cannot find her home in those prosaic hearts, forsooth, she is a coquette. They reward her for the most melodious, blossoming hours that ever strewed their lives, by pronouncing her a heartless, incomplete woman. All her airy graces, her witching smiles, her wit, and enchanting mien, base and treacherous endeavors.

“Because she has given them a look into Paradise, they complain that she does not bestow this Eden upon them for ever. Poor souls! I can fancy that it would be chilling enough to be perpetually kindling their altar fires. She would have to bring the fire and sacrifice too!”

“By heavens! you are madly in love with her,” cried Carlton, switching his boots, uneasily, with his cane.

“Thou glorious vindicator of woman! Thou shalt be canonized by my brush,” said the artist, laughing, and making an appropriate gesture, upon an imaginary canvass.

Bayard shrugged his shoulders, leaned back in his chair, folded his arms, and looked down with impenetrable eyes, as if to shut out all further discussion.

Another half hour passed away in moody silence; only the rippling of the book or engraving leaves as they were turned over, broke the silence.

At length some one addressed the artist.

“What did the servant say who let you in, about this fair caprice?”

“He said, Miss Clyde is engaged at present, I could come in and wait if I liked. For we know she never comes or goes like any one else. After all our waiting we may not see her.”

“Ah! well, if there is the least hope, I shall wait; I have never seen her, and I am told this woman is fairer than a poet’s dream. She can afford to defy etiquette.”

“And so she is,” rejoined Seymour, “for she inspires an enthusiasm for whatsoever is beautiful and good: she illuminates the soul.”

“Hem! humph!” muttered Carlton; “are they all

moonstruck?" then privately to himself, "but my fortune must prevail."

At this instant, the side door slid noiselessly in its groove, and as quietly closed, and Cathara entered, wearing upon her face a bright repose. She seemed to realize the delicious impossibility of floating, rather than walking; so fresh and enchanting, as she glided from one to another, with a word, or a smile, or a light touch of her velvet fingers. Her eyes flashed with a gay look, as she surveyed the sullen group.

"Gentlemen," she said, in a clear voice, and so sweet that the ear was entranced, "what solemn bit of news have you been discussing? Are stocks down? The banks broken? Nothing less than disaster and impending ruin, can paint your faces thus dolefully?"

The radiant presence of this beautiful woman changed the aspect of those faces, as by a charm, and each one felt desirous of bestowing upon her the best looks he could command.

There was a loftiness in her air, even when the gay smile played about her lips, that claimed their deference, and kept inviolate a certain barrier of presence. Dressed in her draperies of fleecy white, with a fresh-plucked crimson rose in her hair, she looked like a slender young queen, clad in her coronation robes.

"Gentlemen," she said, "as I cannot converse with you all upon your favorite topics this morning, will some one have the grace to sing or play for us—(Ernst, where is your violin?) or, tell us of something good, that some one has dared to do?"

"Please, Miss Clyde," said a very handsome youth, springing forward; "I have heard that you sing so beautifully. I have in my hand a manuscript of the music of the dirge sung over the gifted Malibran's grave. Will you not sing it for us?"

Cathara shaded her eyes, which were dark as pine woods at twilight, while she read the musical score, and then the words carefully over. The latter pleased her.

“I will sing it,” she said, and turned and led the way to the music room.

As she bent over the harp, her eyes were veiled by the heavy fringes which swept the pure contour of the cheek. Her mouth wore a look of sweet austerity, which drove away light thoughts. Her slender throat bent like a lily, drooping with the weight of its own sweetness. Her hands wandered caressingly over some fine chords in the minor key; her voice blended its clear tone with the varying accompaniment. The words she sang, with the purest enunciation, were—

“With faded flowers, thy lyre I'll wreath,
The flowers that gladdened thee,
And every drooping bud, shall breathe
A perfumed memory;
No other touch can wake that strain,
From whence such music came,
Unless it be the night-wind's wing,
To syllable thy name.

The sculptured urn, that decks the grave,
Where sleeps the mighty one,
The brazen records of the dead,
Time breathes on, and they're gone;
Thy grave shall be a holy spot,
When years have passed away,
Thou art not one to be forgot,
Thou art not for decay.”

The exquisite pathos of the last clause, its touching emphasis, had but died away, when the singer rose, light as the morning's mist, and bowing low her grace-

ful head, said, "Gentlemen, I have the honor to bid you good morning." *He did not bid*

A hush, a spell, a silence, and one by one, the guests slowly went out; all save Bayard, who appeared as if dwelling in a radiant abstraction, too powerful to be broken. At length, like one wandering in a blessed dream, he rose, his eye still lingering upon the Divine Symbol of Harmony, he sprang quickly, and raised a little, soft, violet-colored glove from the floor, pressed it to his lips, inhaled its dainty perfumed breath, hid it away upon his heart, and he, too, departed.

mind here

CHAPTER X.

A N E P I S O D E .

JUNE was waning ; but bore in its bosom, a few remaining days, fierce and fiery, as the sword which guarded Eden.

Cathara had been importuned into attending a series of night entertainments. The drill exercises of fashionable life seemed infinitely toilsome. Night after night to listen to compliments, and dance to the same music, how tiresome it became to her ! She was so apt to be thinking, in the intervals of the music, of a pale face, whose eyes had interrogated hers for something celestial, something that should shed an aroma over the stern face of death. The discipline of labor and sorrow how infinitely sweeter it seemed, than fashion's hard toil. She pitied those who never got sight of any other world to dream of, and, thankful that she had some aim in life, she resolved to stand by the faculty and insight into art, which God had given her, and work out to the utmost, its highest possible results for herself and others. She worked with more than her usual intentness to complete a painting that was to be sold for the benefit of a poor artist. An excess of application, and the heat of the city, drove all sleep from her eyelids. The weary wheels of life moved heavily, under the pressure of this exhaustion. In place of the radiant lineaments and fine proportions which had hitherto invested her mind with a subtle

informing charm, came an assemblage of faces, pale, ghastly, woe-stricken, such as she had sometimes seen in some wretched beggar, wandering in the street, unrelieved by one shade of sweetness or ruth. Those upturned, piteous faces, tossed like driven foam from before her fancy, rising portentous and unbidden, made her heart sicken with pain. Could the tragic truths of poverty, its woes and crimes be as bad, in reality, as this haunting presentation. She would go and find out ; disperse the visionary by the reality ; at all events, lessen its terror, or perhaps some one was calling her to the rescue, and so far, she was a spiritualist, for she often obeyed intimations that were too subtle to bide much handling, and yet were quite as impelling as the clearest deductions of logic.

She ordered her carriage, summoned the old butler (her uncle's faithful attendant during his lifetime) to attend her, and started upon her first visit to the abodes of the poor. She had poured her charities liberally into the reception boxes—it was easy for her to give out of her abundance ; but now she would get experience for herself. As Cathara left her door, Mrs. Frippery passed in her carriage, looked out, and waved her white hand. Mrs. Frippery is always waving her white hand. A votary she is to daily, endless shopping, and fritter, fritter. She loves to turn over finery with that white hand of hers, all glittering and alive as it is, with a wonderful ruby, which must have lain hardening in the earth, and drank into its bosom the warmth of a thousand summers, before it was fit to adorn that fair hand. Is it not tragic to see life made up of a single gesture ? Vain and audible enough, however !

Another moment, and Lulu Lee's phaeton drove by. This lady was invested in the rarest and freshest of

summer toilettes. She lolled back with an air of supreme indolence ; her eyes, however, shone powerful, in brilliant, steadfast scrutiny. Swift as a flash, she had reviewed her retrospections, and coincident with these, she hurled Cathara a withering look, keen as a poisoned dart. Then she watched to see it rankle. It did not rankle, and Lulu knew it, as she thought—"I cannot touch those visionary people. I caught her expression: it was clear as crystal, and dreamy as a prophet's, while her brow seemed to melt away, in white lustre, under the deep shadow of her hair, so purple black." There are no such worshippers of beauty as those who are beautiful ; and Lulu recalled Cathara's face many times during the day, as she said, over and over, "I could worship that woman. I can recognize superior character, and pay my homage to it, but the superior ones never come to me, else I might not be all melancholy within, festooned without by mirth's gay sallies, and mocking diablerie." Lulu was vexed that she had not succeeded, as she hoped to do, in securing the *prestige* of Cathara's acquaintance.

"Ah me!" thought Cathara. "Looks of hate from such beautiful faces ! I wonder if she knows that she can put on the semblance of a handsome demon ?"

As she drove through some forlorn, unfrequented regions, the rain began to drizzle, a hot, unrefreshing shower, and to mingle with the reeking, running filth of the streets. As Cathara cast her eyes upward to a miserable tenement house, she saw the head of a venerable looking old man thrust hastily out of the window, then as quickly withdrawn. He had recognized her ; she knew him in an instant. Their eyes had met. A sickness of surprise passed over Cathara as she summoned the coachman, through the speaking tube, to

stop on the instant. The old servant followed her, up the reeling, mouldy staircase. She bade him remain in waiting, while she tapped on the door, and entered. An old man with difficulty rose from his seat, as the young girl pressed eagerly forward, and said—

“Are you here, Mr. Somerton, on an errand of charity too?”

A faint flush passed over the aged octogenarian’s pallid face, as he shook his head by way of reply.

“It is not possible that you live here. Oh, cruel! what can have brought you to this?”

At this instant a boy of some twelve years entered. His large eyes were sunken: his whole appearance evidenced a pinched, meagre existence. He smiled pitifully, when he saw a lady standing there, and ran to hand her a rickety chair to sit upon. Cathara took it, and drew near the old man. There was an air of peace and resignation about him, which hallowed the room.

“When you left the village of Vicaring, did you not go to reside with a daughter?” inquired Cathara, in tones of tender sympathy.

“Yes; but that is some years ago. When my daughter, Mrs. Wolfe, went abroad, my resources were soon exhausted, in the long illness of my youngest daughter. Her marriage did not please her sister; she was left a widow, and was never strong after the birth of that little boy,” looking sadly at Paul. “She has gone,” and here the old man paused. He did not like to speak of the struggles and weariness that had befallen him in life’s journey since.

The air of the room was suffocating. How the boy contrived to maintain existence here, was wonderful. Cathara felt a faintness stealing over her. She summoned the butler; one of the large well-packed bas-

kets of edibles was brought up, and some wine. Cathara then pressed some money into Paul's hand, as she turned and said,

"One week from to-day, and I will come for you both to drive." And pressing the old man's hand, she gave him a look that shot encouragement into his heart.

Cathara then visited a number of other wretched abodes, and distributed money, with a promise of bread and clothing. On her way home her mind became possessed of a plan which so absorbed her, that it thrust out all other contemplations. The next morning, accompanied by the old servant, Cathara at an early hour drove to one of the stations, took the cars; and at the end of two hours and a half, and after riding some sixty miles into the country, they got out, according to the direction, which the young girl had carefully read and re-read, and paused at the little village of Graston. An old-fashioned Rockaway was obtained at the village inn. A cicerone, in the shape of a village boy, was obtained, and rapidly they bowled along the smooth road, and under the giant elms now in greenest leaf. The rains of the previous day had cooled the air, and laid the dust. Cathara had never felt more keenly sensitive, more exhilarated by the mystic, penetrating strength and sweetness of nature. The lustrous day—the unfathomable depths of sky—the white clouds, dappling its hyacinthine hue, now kindled into a blaze of vapor by the flashing sun.

The perfume of scented grass and blossoming clover, the singing brook, that, pleasantly garrulous, followed every turn of the road, reflecting the elder blossoms as they peeped into the transparent water. The blue hills rising from the borders of the Connecticut, and sleeping afar off, until they melted away into the

tender azure—summer's waving tapestries of glossy leaves and bloom, and dreamy shadows, and fair fields of air—her gleaming poetry and unscored music—overcame the young girl with a sense of worship, a sweetness of enchantment, inexact, undefined, but acceptable as a cup of water to a thirsty, craving soul.

At length they paused at a rustic gate, which led down a shaded lane, and so on for some distance, until they reached an old-fashioned house. The slender columns of the verandah were over-twined with sweet peas, flowering beans, and pink and azure morning-glorries. A neat Quaker woman appeared to do the honors of the cottage. There was a parlor, dining-room, and large bed-room and a kitchen on the first floor; above, were three sleeping-rooms, large, neat, airy, and traversed by the great shadows of the tall trees. She followed Priscilla, the Quaker woman, down a flight of moss-grown steps to an old-fashioned garden, where ranks of large white and yellow lilies were growing, and through that and beyond to a rich green meadow and orchard. Here the same stream flowed discursively. Among the juicy grass, the dandelions, buttercups, and daisies, roamed two cows, knee deep in succulent herbage, and content.

“Whose pretty cows are those?” inquired Cathara.

“They are mine,” answered Priscilla.

“Will you sell them, to me,” inquired Cathara.

“But what can a dainty lady, like you, want of my cows?”

“I mean to buy this place, of course I want cows, to look serene and picturesque, in the meadow; I also want you to stay here and take care of the house. Will you?”

"I have lived here ten odd years; it is five since mistress died, and I shall be glad to stay here ten more, if we can agree," added the prim little woman.

"I like," said Cathara, "the quaint, polished furniture, so shining and speckless, and these odd curtains, fringed and looped up, and whiter than snow."

"And you will leave the old place just as it is?"

"Just as it is."

"Well, to be sure, I am certain it will be a pleasure to live with so sensible a lady. I thought ye'd be for furbishing up the old place with flimsy furniture, and new-fangled things, no more fit for an old house than they'd be for me."

"But I am not to live here, only to come when I fancy, and all looks so pleasant, that I think my fancy will be nimble. Get some one to assist you, and a week from to-day, if the day is fair, let the tea-table be spread in the garden, under that rustic arbor. I shall bring two friends with me to tea, and we shall all be so happy!" and she flitted about like some airy sprite, first into one room, and then into another, a little song gurgling extempore, from her lips, and then, down among the beds of fennel, sweet thyme, rosemary, bergamot, and coriander seed; all scenting the air, with a delicious mingled cloud of balm.

"Good-bye, Priscilla," she said, in her sweet voice. "I must run away from all this rest and sweetness; a week from to-day, I shall come, and let all be as neat and trim as yourself."

The good woman was left in a maze, at this sudden innovation upon her uniform life. She bustled about, and thought of a thousand things to do in a minute. "I have not been in such a flutter for twenty years; it just makes me feel young again, to see that pretty creature, chirping about like a robin in the spring."

It was on Thursday, the first of July, when Mr. Somerton raised the casement in his close room, then closed it again, so suffocating were the execrable smells that rose from the wretched street. Oaths and curses mingled with the pollution of the air. Noisy brawl and laughter shook the house. The old man sat by his drooping grandson, who had been too weak to rise this morning. He was wondering if Cathara had forgotten her promise. One day had passed beyond the appointed time.

“ Oh ! Grandpa, why did the young lady promise to come for us, and then forget us ? ”

“ I think she will come to-day, we must not give up hoping, too soon.”

“ In my dream, just now, Grandpa, I thought I saw the white ducks sailing in the pond where we lived so long ago. Don’t you remember the willow tree that hung over the water. And I dreamed I saw a large, yellow butterfly, sitting upon the wild-brier rose, and I ran and ran after it, and just as I had got my hand upon it, I fell down, and that woke me up, and now I feel so hot and tired. Do you think I shall ever go plashing in a little brook again, with my feet in the cool water, where you can count the white smooth stones ? ”

The old man dropped a tear upon the little wasted hands ; but he tried to suppress the workings of his broken heart, as he thought how improbable that the boy could live many days, in that stifling, pent-up air ; and he rose, and lifted his Bible, well worn with constant use, and began to read.

“ There is a river, whose waters make glad the city of our God.” A stir was heard, a knock, and the fluttering of Cathara’s light garments sounded like the

rustling of angels' wings, and almost as beaming and celestial was the expression of her face, as she entered, and grasped the old man's hand—and then ran to Paul ; sprinkling some delicious cologne about, so as to give a momentary freshness to the room.

"I have come for you, now, Paul. Yes, you are weak ; but you will be strong in half an hour, when we get where the flowers blow." And bidding her servant carry him down to the carriage, she urged the old man on gently. Her zeal overcame a host of difficulties ; she took up his cherished Bible, and concealed it under her shawl. The old butler drove with his charge to a nice bathing establishment, had all personal wants attended to, fresh linen, and new suits supplied. In two hours, they joined their young benefactress ; the boy's soft eyes were absolutely overbrimming with joy. So nice, and restored to himself, the old man looked in his clean linen and black suit ; and Cathara could think of nothing but a young Raphael, as she glanced at Paul's black curls and darker eyes, into whose broad white collar she had caught a knot of crimson ribbon, that proved just color enough to set off his little pale face. Once out of the city, they drove slowly. Paul lay back and enjoyed every breath. It was a Sabbath hour to the good old man ; he smiled upon the trees, the flowers, the velvet verdure.

"Grandpa, is not this like heaven, and those 'green pastures' you read of?"

And the old man nodded his head, but could not speak a word. A little while, and they came to the gate which led to the lane.

"Oh! are we going in under those pretty trees, just like a forest ?" said Paul.

The gate shut behind them ; the horses walked slow-

ly under the fresh, swaying boughs, and a bird piped from his leafy arcade. Paul was in ecstacies.

The young girl's heart was overflowing with content, as she only said, "Why is it that God permits me to be so fortunate, as to make some one happy?" Priscilla stood waiting on the lower steps of the porch, in stiff muslin cap and apron, and handkerchief, pinned across her slender waist.

Cathara flew out of the carriage. Priscilla took the light form of Paul in her strong arms, and bore him to a mound of new-mown hay. A laugh rippled from his lips. Cathara let Mr. Somerton rest upon the porch. She saw him lean his venerable head upon his oaken cane; his lips appeared to move like one in prayer. She ran to the hay-mound, and whispered to Paul that he was not to go back to the city any more, and that, as soon as he was strong enough, she would take him down and show him the brook, the cows, and the orchard."

"The brook! the brook! oh! grandpa, hear the brook! and then to see cows."

Every moment Paul seemed to improve; he tossed up little handfuls of the fresh-cut grass over his head, and shouted aloud for joy.

A strange delight filled Cathara; she longed to make the whole world happy.

Soon, Priscilla came to call them to tea, and she sped away with Paul as though he were a feather, and safely deposited him at the table, under the arbor.

Little golden pats of butter, scarlet radishes, and ruby strawberries, and delicate bread, were arranged, with new-laid eggs, brown bread, fresh honey, and cream. Priscilla administered delicious tea, in tiny old-fashioned china cups, which had not been

social for many a year. Her grave, gentle movements, were full of an unusual alacrity.

“ Oh ! how nice and lovely, how sweet and pretty,” Paul broke in, every moment. After tea, Mr. Somerton laid his hand upon Cathara’s head and blessed her, and would have uttered his gratitude, but the happy girl refused to listen, saying, “ She it was who was greatly his debtor.”

The next day Cathara returned to town.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LITTLE BROWN HOUSE.

Now it so chanced, if there be any such thing as chance in the action of our lives, that the home which Cathara had chosen for Mr. Somerton, adjoined an old place, called the Rectory; and we will narrate some events which occurred here two years previous to the opening of our story. This time-worn, moss-grown structure, stood very nearly in the centre of the four acres which comprised its domain. Near the house, and arching high above it, like a canopy, rose a venerable elm tree, looking as if it were the object of its high, broad, and flourishing life, to stand faithful custodian of the home that looked like a brown nest under the tree. On the north side, and reaching up to the gable peaks, clambered a late rose, just blooming out into double damask blossoms, and striving with its neighbor, the coral honeysuckle, to see which could first scale and cover the sharp slopes of the upper windows.

A verdant grass-plot stretched out in front of the quaint porch, and extended down to the fence, which was built of stone, with a light parapet of latticed wood erected upon it. Wild clematis tangled its gauzy green leaves over it, now heavy with the buds which would soon open into bridal blossoms, beautifully fine and white.

The entrance lay at the corner, and followed up a zig-zag path, marked by high box on either side. Here lived Mrs. Temple, with her only child, May Temple. The porch was furnished with seats, and opened into a broad, low-ceiled hall, that extended through the house. When the rear door was open, a quiet view of woods in the distance, and a nearer one, of garden, and meadow, and silver brook, solaced the eye. Although for more than seventeen years the summer grass had waved its emerald shade over the late Rector's grave, in the yew-hedge enclosure, not far off, yet the arrangement of his study remained the same. It is the apartment on the right as you enter, and is a square room of good proportions. On one side range highly polished, quaintly carved book-cases, of black-walnut wood. The deviser, a man of some fancy, I ween, crowned each with a broad wreath, into which cherubs' heads, and doves, and olive branches, are grotesquely blended. Behind the glass panes, braided over with slender pieces of the wood into cross-work, stand the ancient counsellors of the church, together with a rare collection of the old hymns and songs that comprise the sacred poetry, which had been preserved as a rich inheritance. These holy lays, despite persecution and bloodshed, still lived, together with the grand, simple music, which had been sung at the ancient burial service, and on other occasions. Some of these, dating beyond the thirteenth century, were held very sacred by the Temples. They were fond of the good rhythms of the church, especially those which had served as battle songs ; albeit the Temples were a peaceful race, they loved the stirring poetry of conflict.

Cyril Temple, the grandfather of the late Rector, had established the first Episcopalian Church erected in

Graston, and this old library, its books and belongings, its marked passages and marginal notes, had duly descended to the late incumbent.

Upon the high mantle-shelf, at each end, stood tall silver-branched candlesticks, filled with wax candles; and over the narrow shelf hung the portrait of an officer in his uniform, the dark blue of which, engirt by the crimson sword belt, made an agreeable point for the eye to rest upon, amid the neutral tints which prevailed over the furniture, to say nothing of the stately presence and the fine eyes which looked away, and which you so longed to have turn upon you, that you might try to fathom their full expression. A carpet, with dark green ground, strewn over with white stars; a high-backed sofa, covered with dark green leather, several small chairs of the same, and two very ample arm-chairs, of similar style, occupied their respective places. The two latter were located in the window niches, over which the elm tree dipped and furled its long shadowy plumage. In one of these, the late Rector gave himself up to the delectation of his favorite authors, or to the discussion of them with his friend and neighbor, Dr. Craithorne. Both were men of quiet, thoughtful aspect, as might be seen from their pendant portraits, which hung near to each other. The minister, always serene and placid,—a natural placidity. The physician with a demeanor which declared that he had wrested *his* tranquility and enforced it. But this was a long time ago.

Mrs. Temple, abjuring all innovations, and cherishing the old associations religiously, survived, while about her sported her blithe little daughter, casting no retrospective glances after that which her mother had loved and lost. Life beat too exultant in her young bosom

for that. Always clad in black, since her husband's death, Mrs. Temple's very delicate health kept her a kind of sofa prisoner, and added to her naturally pensive disposition.

Her eyes were often turned from the reflection of herself in the little oval mirror which hung opposite her lounge: from the portrait of her husband, with his pale, grave face, and his black canonicals, to her daughter, with a sort of surprise, that so blooming a creature could be their child. Never was mourner's hearth enlivened by brighter presence. Like the fire which springs up and burns, when the dark mould of the coal is cleft. Nature is fond of surprises. She keeps a reserved corps. Sooner or later her naphtha flame burns.

The Rectory stood comparatively isolated from the village. Mrs. Temple's delicate health forbade her visiting, even if she had been inclined. Her social claims had become very limited, and she clung to her quiet life with that dread of innovation, which grows upon the invalid. May's life might, hence, have been lonely, had she not possessed such an exquisite endowment of joyousness and sensibility. It was as though she knew she were beautiful, which is of itself a delightful conviction, and in harmony with her interior self, and with nature; and yet it was evidently something that she had never reasoned about; but sport she must, and all the lower world must sport with her. Dogs must bound and frolic about her, kittens chase a merry round, lambs poke their noses into her little apron pockets for sugar. She is on good terms with every animal in the neighborhood. She gives them a personality. The tame canary that flies about the breakfast-room and perches upon her should-

er, and cries : "Peep, peep," she answers, " Ah ! good morning, Sir Blithe Gold, pleasant it is to hear you."

She treats them all as if they were human ; it is evident that she prizes their friendship. Her hands express a caress, and the timid doves bend their heads, while she smooths the feathers upon their opal-tinted necks.

She looks very young, not more than sixteen, though fully formed. Her light hair grows in such low, wavy clusters of ringlets, as almost to defy arrangement ; but she has brushed and rolled away its sunny rings, until they are gathered into a knot, whence they rebel and break out into tendrils and spirals, the delight of the zephyrs. She is lightly, delicately made. An airy creature !

Her glance, if downward, which is not frequent, shows lashes long and fine, which lie like a tender shadow upon the rosy transparency of her cheek.

Her full dark-blue eyes look as if they could never exhaust the incredible beauty which environs her ; they open wide, and often look up to insphere the whole firmament, with all its wide heaven of blue romance.

She often smiled, as if to her spirit, to testify what a good gift she found life to be.

May's education would have been defective, had it not been for one of her father's old parishioners, who had formerly taught the village school, but wearied with the duties of a pedagogue, he had delegated his charge to his son. Mrs. Temple, being unwilling to send her darling to a public school, interceded with the elder Ramsey, and he instructed May in all that he knew, which consisted of all the plain branches of a thorough English education, together with Latin and Greek.

You would hardly believe that the small ringleted head which sits so gracefully upon those white polished shoulders, and neck just like a baby's, was so familiar with the roots of perverse verbs, and the idioms of two dead languages. Her mother often sighed, and wished that she had studied French and German instead. It could, she was sure, be of no use for that child to know so much of a long since buried past and its forgotten heroes.

"May, you are a little antique; while I am twenty years behind the time, you are a thousand. You ought to have young society."

"Have I not," said May, pointing to a kitten, who was playing with the bow of ribbon upon her slipper.

"It is fortunate that there is one woman in the house who has some spunk," interposed Deborah Matthews, a woman of the Methodist persuasion, who entered at this juncture. She had lived with Mrs. Temple as faithful servant, ever since her marriage, and she felt herself identified with her mistress in every breath she drew. She had heard the conversation and had joined in it, as we have narrated, and now, she continued: "We should all look like Noah and his wife, when she took his arm and walked out of the ark, if I let your mother have her way, with her caps and gowns, and your bonnets and dresses, Miss May; she wants them made up as she used to wear hers when she was a girl."

"Debby, you are very good to take such care of us," said Mrs. Temple, fixing her mild eyes upon her faithful servant.

"No, I am not good at all; but it is just the pride I've got within me, which drives me to show other people that we know what is respectable and right. I am

going to S—— to morrow, Miss May, have you any choice about the color of your two muslins?"

"Let me have a toga, a blue ground, with a flock of miniature sheep sleeping upon it."

"What would such toggery look like?" said the good woman, walking out, for she thought the coffee was smelling a little as though it were getting burnt; "that child has no more idea of shopping than a kitten."

Deborah was a tall, angular woman, of fifty years, whose dress, anxious as she was about that of her mistress and May's, never changed in its fashion from year to year—brown on week days, and gray on Sunday; her tight sleeves and narrow skirt were relieved by a stiff cambric handkerchief of unimpeachable whiteness, pinned across her breast, and a very high-crowned cap of a fine muslin, starched very stiff, without a border. Her brown cheek was furrowed, her mouth sarcastic, her chin jutted out in a promontory, and her cap ran up into a bald snowy peak. Her eyes were so solemn, May laughed, whenever she saw them fixed upon her, so calm, searching, and steadfast; and that laugh was the sweetest sound in the world to Deborah.

"Ah! laugh, little one, in the innocence of your heart; few can face old Deborah as you can," was her silent comment.

Deborah was a sort of Nemesis in the village. She was so loyal to truth, so stanch and unflinching in casting self behind her, so strong and plain, that every one who had swerved a hair's-breadth from the line she had laid down, trembled to meet her. Doubtful points were referred to her judgment, and among her own sect, she was the leader in chief.

It was well known that she managed Mrs. Temple's finances, and when it was seen that she did not carry out her own Methodistic views with respect to Mrs. Temple's and May's wardrobe, or attempt to convert them, as they thought she might, when the power was all in her own hand, she answered their expostulations in such plain terms, they never thought it of any use to interfere again.

"What," she said, "you'd have me go a proselytizing, and mixing up beliefs and sects, when my mistress is ripe for heaven any day, and you'd have me tie up pretty Miss May in a brown bag, and cut off her curls. No, the Lord has dressed her head to suit himself, and I sha'n't meddle with that. You complain that she is bedizened with finery: that pink dress which has riled you so, I matched it by the blows of the flowering almond; and do you call that flaunting? if you do, then you accuse the Lord of making his flowers flaunt. It is all very well for us elders," glancing about at the shorn, prim sisterhood, "who look like the bleak hill-sides, to set an example of plainness, for we are plain, plain as the coarse shaggy bark of a tree, about which artificial flowers don't look well. But there's another sort of example in the world, too, and any one must be a bat not to see the Lord has set his own hand upon it."

For earnestness, sincerity, and fidelity, it would have been difficult to surpass Deborah: she would not only have laid down her life for her mistress or for May; but she would have suffered a life-long martyrdom for them, which is not half so easy. Her persistent warfare against dust, and every species of disorder, was carried on as though she thought the pillars of Satan's kingdom were made to tremble thereby. Deborah

was oftentimes a good deal uplifted in her mind, had wonderful dreams, and special revelations, which seemed to lend a new vigor to her step and a more untiring zeal to her life. But flag she never did, nor get low-spirited, nor dreamy, and nobody dared to complain of being "out of sorts," before her. "Don't whine," she would say, "you'll have trouble enough by-and-bye, that'll make you cry right out." * * *

It was an enticing summer's morning. Beads of dew jewel every blade and leaf, making the green world about the brown Rectory a paradise of freshness, and leafy alcoves, and beckoning beauty.

"Oh! the day will be perfect, mother, and I must not waste a single moment of it. The bird must ride with me."

Her mother's eyes watched every one of her movements, as if they were life and music to her, as they are. First, as May fastens about her waist the skirt of her dark blue riding-habit; then as she opens a cage, ties a ribbon about the neck of the canary, which she attaches to a loop in the edge of her round straw hat, and then ties it under her chin by its broad blue strings. The canary chirps about her, and appears to understand it, as he flies off and then returns to her shoulder. She kisses her hand to her mother, mounts a low Indian pony, and flies away; the bird piping, curveting, half flying, half sailing after her. On her return, she turns into the green lane and rides in to exchange a word with Priscilla, the Quaker woman, who dotes upon her, and takes it very kind in the young lady to give her a call. She had gathered the folds of her riding-habit in her hand, and was ready to spring from the horse, when a horseman approached and vaulted from his saddle in an instant, and held

back the gate. "Thank you," she said, with a quick survey of admiration; and with the naiveté of a child, she waited to see him regain his horse, and then smiled upon rider and horse too! She did so admire a handsome horse, and the stranger was mounted upon a dark chestnut, whose shining flanks were marked by patches of white. As he rode off he raised the straw hat which shaded his face, and its superb and uncommon beauty. From beneath his black, straight eyebrows, his dark eyes shone with a fascination and power which caused a recipient of his glance to linger. "The most beautiful person you ever imagined, mother, I have just seen, in the shape of a cavalier, who sprang off his horse and opened the gate for me at Summer Dell." Her mother gazed fondly at the young girl, with her fair curls floating about her fine forehead, and a garland that she had woven of the field flowers, passed over her shoulder across her slender waist, like some beautiful floral order.

"Who could he be, May?"

"I am sure I cannot imagine, unless it be Aubrey Craithorne. I heard Debby say, that he was expected from abroad."

"Very likely, May. I should be glad to see the young man; I knew his father well; but be shy of this stranger until you are certain who he is."

Several times after this, May, in her rides, met the same equestrian; he gave her a courteous bow, and a long, earnest glance of approval.

"He looked," said May, (after one of these encounters,) "as if he desired to speak with me; whereupon I whispered to Indiana, and she understood it in a moment, and flew off like a bird."

A few days after, as the same rider was passing the

Rectory, he raised his eyes to one of the upper windows, and saw May looking out from the masses of fair wistaria, which now hung low, in heavy grape-like clusters. The long blonde curls blended beautifully with the lilac blossoms, and heightened the picturesque aspect of her face. It was like one of those fine representations of Ophelia, published some years since, where the fairest possible head is encircled by a wreath of waving foliage, and so delicately limned as to suggest, rather than to portray, the most winning loveliness. The stranger lingered long, hoping to meet her eyes, which seemed riveted upon the flowers of the graceful creeper. At length she glanced quickly out, and her cloudless blue eyes fell upon him. A certain acceleration in her pulses might have taught her that it was sometimes dangerous, even to look upon a new acquaintance.

This episode in the young girl's life hung before her fancy, a presence replete with the silent mystery of strange and sweet attraction.

CHAPTER XII.

ROSE-COLORED CURTAINS.

TWELVE miles from the village of Graston, lived Mrs. Charles Wolfe, a distant relative of Mrs. Temple. During the course of the year, she generally managed to pay one or two flying visits at the Rectory. Mrs. Temple thought it was so kind in her to remember her, and took it as a proof of the goodness of her heart.

Mrs. Wolfe was the most assiduous seeker of society, and cherished the belief that every one of her acquaintances might, sooner or later, be turned to some account. Professing to be the most unworldly, unsophisticated creature in the world, she was a model in carrying out her stealthy purposes. In every thing she did, she looked for some gain to herself. She was a woman of extraordinary restlessness. She loved a whirl of excitement. She delighted to have a dozen letters handed in at once, a rush of visitors, a crowd of plans, an excess of discursive occupation. Life was only pleasing to her, so far as it resembled a kaleidoscope, and could present a new combination.

Impatient and capricious by nature, she veiled the imperious beat of her pulses underneath a manner soothing as an opiate. She was a connoisseur in manners, and hated to appear that which she was—a bustling woman.

Solitude, quiet, repose, were demons of *ennui* to her ; yet how often she beguiled earnest people, who loved nature, by portraying to them what she termed her heart's inmost longings for hours of serene converse, of deep communion, of days and months passed in lonely, sequestered vales ; or by the margin of unfrequented lakes, in whose glassy surface the deer traced his antlered ornaments.

She had any quantity of Fancy's airy scaffolding, ready to be run up at a moment's warning.

Every thing in the world she tampered with. Philosophy, science, religion, and art. She bounded through a book with the wiry spring of a grasshopper, but cunningly culled some specimen, to retail the quality of the herbage.

Quick, intuitive, a tactician, she caught up the mental outline of others, and reflected it as a photographic plate gives back its portrait. Many felt her sympathy as delightful, yet, like the metal likeness, it was often pronounced a caricature.

Mrs. Wolfe had a knack of furnishing her house with the labor and taste of others. She flattered and cajoled it out of them ; her victims scarce knew how they were beguiled.

She had just completed the refitting of a pretty boudoir, all save the long rose de chine curtains, of the finest cashmere, which were to shade the window. She had set her heart upon their being embroidered in the most exquisite manner.

Who should she give them to, *as a favor* ? Deeply pondering these things, she told her servants that she was called away upon important business. Then the untiring woman speeds her light phaeton rapidly over the smooth road. She was delighted with herself for

her lucky idea. She approved of herself; and indeed, I wonder what the honest pony thought, as he pricked up his ears, to hear his mistress giving way to little bursts and spells of intoxicating laughter, that morning, as they pursued their path along the road together. She was indemnifying herself for the trouble she had often taken, in days gone by, to circumvent some stubborn people. It was so funny to herself to see what a clever actress she could be; as she rehearsed the part, another fit of sharp laughter convulsed her. After a while, her solitary mirthfulness subsided, and her face fell into its natural expression, which was both dogged and sneering. Whether this was the counterpart of her spirit, I know not; but it certainly was not her company face. As she approached the Rectory gate, and fastened the rein to the standing-post,—as she glided up to the entrance door with a lady-like air, her countenance grew amiable, and her manner suave.

Through the open window came the clear tones of May Temple's voice, reading to her mother:

“I am the resurrection and the life: He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live again.”

Something in the sweet wind, laden with those words, smote her like a striving spirit as it passed by; as if it said—

“Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die.”

One moment's pause, one moment's revulsion of feeling, during which she was half inclined to turn away from the further uplifting of the curtain which revealed such unlike scenery, as that which was mounted upon her own private theatre of action, and then she grew provoked at herself for being disturbed at a passage that she had read many times. “I rather think I am

as good a Christian as any of them," and she slipped securely back into her selfhood, and was joined to her idols once more.

"How beautifully your daughter reads!" exclaimed Mrs. Wolfe, pushing open the door and surprising Mrs. Temple with a tender little kiss, and arms about her neck. Then, leading May to her mother, "I have come on purpose to run away with this pretty Rosebud; I want her to bloom awhile in my parterre. I have no daughter. Will you let her come and enliven me for a few days?"

"She has never been from home," said Mrs. Temple, as she glanced with a fond incertitude at May.

"Then I am quite sure that she ought to go; she wants to go," said Mrs. Wolfe, studying the brilliant animation which the invitation had called into May's eager face. "The world cannot always remain a sealed book to her. She must come to have some experience at last. And then you know that I am almost as quiet as yourself."

"Can I go, mother?" spoke May's candid voice.

Mrs. Temple's pensive eyes lingered another moment upon that bright pleading face.

"Run, then, to Deborah, to pack your box; Mrs. Wolfe does not like to wait long, I see, since I cannot persuade her to lay aside her bonnet."

"You think me impatient, I fear, Mrs. Temple, but I have so many engagements, so much to do for other people, I am compelled to be a great economist of my time.—Is this your embroidery?" she exclaimed, changing the subject, and raising up a large crimson cushion from off the sofa.

"No, that is May's."

"Ah! then you have taught her your excellence in this exquisite art?"

"She surpasses me now," replied the mother, her eyes resting upon the white beads, which, in creamy pattern, rolled like froth over the crimson surface.

"Rubies bathed in foam," said Mrs. Wolfe, enthusiastically. "How fascinating it must be!"

"It has been my pastime during long hours of confinement and invalid incapability of greater effort; but my eyes will not permit the application now," said Mrs. Temple. Here Deborah entered, bearing a waiter with delicate sandwiches, cake, and wine, and after a short interval, May ran in equipped.

"You are a little miracle of swiftness, after my own heart," said Mrs. Wolfe, sipping the wine rapidly, and eating a morsel; "but I see I must run off with you before your mother has time to recant. Believe me, I shall watch over her as if she were my own child; she shall be my most special care."

"Only bring her back as well and as happy as she is now, that is all I ask," said the mother, clinging to her daughter.

"Trust me, trust me, adieu, adieu," and Mrs. Wolfe waved her hand, as she bore May off quickly.

Deborah shrugged her shoulders, as they drove away. She forbore to reproach her mistress, who looked so down.

"She ought to have a change, Debbie; see a little of the world," remarked Mrs. Temple, half distrustful of her own judgment, when she saw the glum aspect of the latter.

"A lamb among wolves," was Deborah's counsel to herself, as she hurried into the orchard to gather the early apples, that were dropping ripe from the trees; and for fear that her plain outspoken tongue should let out something that would disturb her kind mistress.

“That woman is just a little too smooth,” she continued, to herself; “It isn’t in flesh and blood to be always as sweet as a honey-pot. I would rather trust a tongue that was a little tart; but I hope a week won’t hurt the child. I shall go for her myself, if she stays longer than that;” and having filled her clean check-apron with early spice apples, she walked into the house and up to the low garret, where she gave vent to her feelings by attacking a spider just as he was about to practise fine cobwebbing. The stores of savory mint; dried lavender; sweet marjoram; coriander and caraway seed, together with heaps of last year’s nuts, put into excellent order, had at length, a placable influence.

Mrs. Wolfe, pleased that she had got the possession of those pliant fingers beside her, in a moment saw the rosy folds of her curtains wave down from their cornice, complete and perfect, loaded with their silver fruitage. She was glad that she had chosen the clusters of grapes. How rich they would look! How chaste! How costly!

As the horse kept his measured jog along the road, Mrs. Wolfe turned from her fancy sketches. “I have no daughter,” sighed the lady, pressing May’s hand; “that is why I love to run away with such little darlings as you are. You shall see my son. He is just thirteen, a spiritual creature, and has such a taste for art, young as he is. We hope to take him to Italy some day; that is the land of the ideal. I think your influence will be delightful upon him. By the way, your old tutor told me that you were a good Latin scholar.”

“Mr. Ramsay likes to praise me,” said May, quietly, “he is so amiable.”

"And with justice, I have no doubt. You will try and help poor Clarence about his verbs, won't you? He is so clever, but he is not fond of study. It is a rare thing,"—Mrs. Wolfe hurried on to say, without waiting a reply from May,—"to find a woman who has had a good substratum for a finished education. My husband and I are doing all we can to elevate the educational views of the women of our country."

Here she was too deep for May, who wondered if the women were so lamentably ignorant.

"I shall take great pleasure in introducing you to our house. You can hardly imagine a rougher, more uninviting place, than it was when we took it; but in perfecting it, I assure you, the most beautiful uses have grown out of this successful endeavor. The beautiful and good, my sweet young friend, can never be separated." And so, talking on, they entered the gate which opened upon the Wolfe grounds. The road was pleasantly circuitous, and ranged on either side were hollies and rhododendrons, and many other dark evergreens, which May admired, and said, "looked like faithful sentinels guarding the way." After many turns and windings they came in sight of a pretty Gothic cottage, where they alighted.

"The scenery is charming," said May, looking about with girlish eagerness.

"Oh! I shall show you finer views than these from the road; but first I will call my maid; she shall lead you up stairs to your room."

A few moments sufficed for May to throw aside her bonnet and light mantle, and seeing no one in the hall as she crossed it, she wandered out of the house, and attracted by a sinuous, shady walk, went and looked down the leafy aisle. A large Newfoundland dog stood

midway down. It was the first of the species she had seen, and a splendid fellow. His coat, jetty black and full of curling waves ; his face was marked with a white cross, and his brown eyes looked at her with quiet intelligence. She extended her hand to pat the creature, when a smart blow fell upon her shoulders, making them tingle.

“That is my dog. What are you touching him for ?”

May turned, hurt and astonished, to look at her castigator ; his long flowing hair, and resemblance to his mother’s lineaments, left no doubt in her mind but that this was the “spiritual creature” of whom that mother had spoken.

“Some muscle in the boy, too,” thought May, shrugging her conscious shoulders ; but she answered in a gentle voice—

“Are you not willing that I should stroke him ?”

“No ! he is my dog, and no one has the least right to speak to him but me.”

“But I have never seen such a dog as that,” said May.

“I don’t care for that,” was the reply.

Meanwhile the object of this discussion pressed close to May, and leaped upon her with his paws ; but May had no wish to prosecute an acquaintance that had proved so unpleasant, and, turning, she ran quickly back, the dog bounding after her, to the infinite vexation of the boy, who stamped and called in vain, “Scud, Scud,” and to the amusement of May, who could not resist laughing, as breathless she ascended the piazza, where Mrs. Wolfe, provoked that she should have irritated her darling son, stood regarding her with a half satirical look, which cooled the young girl suddenly.

"My dear," said Mrs. Wolfe, "you are too beautiful to be running in that manner; don't you know that such violent exercise over-heats your complexion? You are to take care of the beauty which has been given you."

This sounded oddly enough to the young girl; it was so unlike her mother, and, for a moment, she wished herself at home.

When Clarence saw his mother, he disguised his angry face, and would have turned away, but she called him, anxious now to make all smooth again.

"I want to introduce you to this dear friend, May Temple; my sweetest Clarence, come here."

The boy, unabashed by the late conflict, approached with an assumed smile, which sat strangely upon the lip of boyhood.

"He is so sensitive, and keenly alive to peculiarities in constitution or temperament. Do you feel drawn to her, my child?"

"I love her very much," he said, leaving his mother; and planting himself in front of May, he gave her an ugly, hateful grimace; then, as if weary of being held in leash, he made an immense bound, and, whistling to his dog, they went off towards the thicket.

"I have never dared to curb the original nature of that child, for fear of laying my hand upon something sacred, that the touch might profane. I feel as if there were in him a new element—a power for good untold."

May bent her head to conceal a smile, as she thought of the sound pommeling he had given her.

A bland smile lit up Mrs. Wolfe's face, as she led May about among the pictures, engravings, busts, and little *Sevres vases*, and exquisite fancy-work of every variety, which decked her drawing-room. As May,

after admiring every thing, stooped over to examine a chair, heavy with the superb flowers embroidered thereon, Mrs. Wolfe remarked, "Before you leave, May, do contrive me some little specimen of your exquisite work; some little trifle. I will have the pattern drawn, the silks assorted."

"Oh! pray do. I shall be too happy," responded May, glad to please her.

From the drawing-room they passed into a little hall; at the extreme end was a boudoir draped in pink. A table was spread with a fine, white, linen cloth, and upon it lay the curtains. Mrs. Wolfe turned them carefully over, to show the pattern which had been traced thereon.

"How exquisitely graceful," said May. "These windings invite the needle to follow."

"Here is the silk," opening a little basket, "and every thing is in waiting for the embroiderer from town; but, day by day, she disappoints me, and I am so anxious to have them finished."

"If I thought I could do them well enough to please you, I might commence upon one."

"Oh! that would be too great a labor, and too much trouble for you. To-morrow, perhaps, you may weave in a little bunch of grapes for a specimen of your fairy work—that is, if you feel inclined—here, just in the corner. Not to-day—not to day; to-morrow we will see; I expect company to tea this afternoon; beside, I have the most superior, delightful young Englishman staying with us, to whom I wish to introduce you. He brought letters to us from some dear friends in England."

Mrs. Wolfe now sailed off in superlative humor with herself; she felt that her work was accomplished, and Astonley could amuse himself with and entertain

May, so that she would not have her much on her hands.

Early in the afternoon May was dressed, and down in the drawing-room. A portfolio of Switzerland views attracted her. She had just fastened upon them with an absorption which attested her keen relish for this Alpine scenery, when Mrs. Wolfe entered, followed by three ladies, who had just arrived to tea, and Norman Astonley last of all. He recognized the young girl at a glance, and, drawing near, Mrs. Wolfe introduced him. He at once bent over the portfolio, screening her look of delighted surprise at seeing the handsome equestrian whom she had so often met. May was too unconscious of herself to feel embarrassed by his unexpected presence; and when he led her out to the tea-room, she leaned upon his arm with such a pretty, pleased air, like a curious child, too innocent to blush, or start, or turn pale. As if all this was such a novelty, a sort of a play, she must needs fold her dimpled hands together over his arm, and look up into his face with a bright witchery, as much as to say, "Is this the way the play goes?" No tedious training into the proprieties and etiquette of conventionalism could have made her appear more thoroughbred; none left her so individual. Every movement was guided by a refinement of intuition, which made her bearing free and sweet as air. Mrs. Wolfe was quite astonished, in a lull of the buzz of conversation with her three friends, to hear May questioning this polished, reserved man of the world, "If he did not think he would like to have been born a gipsy, under a hedge, that he might range over the wide world on foot?"

His answer she did not have time to catch, but it was,—

"Softly, my friend, what is it that you are longing to see? Do you want to achieve a fate for yourself?"

"A fate? Oh! no; that seems such a dark word. But it is the beating heart that asks many questions, with no one to answer. Nothing satisfies like being out of doors. I always feel that the sky is a blue canopy for every one to rest under; and so stately, it makes me proud and happy."

He had no time to answer, for Mrs. Wolfe claimed his attention until they rose and left the table, and went all to saunter down by the river-side. Here Mrs. Wolfe held May tightly, that some of the other ladies might get the benefit of the English gentleman's society; meanwhile she enlarged and amplified upon the beauty of this view and that, until she had taken the charm out of all, and left May wondering why she felt herself so void and dull.

Early the following morning, May found herself drawing the embroidery silk through the rose-hued curtains, pleased with the pattern of the vine leaves and grapes as they took form, and stood out in dead silver against the pure rose tints; pleased, too, with her thoughts, which had just that sense of delicious reminiscence and expectation, which makes each stir of the breath an ineffable joy.

At intervals, her eyes glanced at the vista, which the open window commanded, and which terminated with the framework of hills beyond the banks of the Connecticut, and its unrippled surface, reflecting the sky of peace it held in its bosom. She thought of the moonlight that haunted its water the previous evening. Of the beautiful stranger, of the charming coincidence of meeting him so unexpectedly, of the pleasure of

weaving in the garland, which, with a generous emulation, she resolved she would complete alone.

Astonley was not surprised to see the young girl look up and glow at his entrance, not bashful, but admiringly, as if he were a superior being. But her intensely sweet, earnest, worshipping admiration was new, and had its potency even over him. May never even supposed it possible for his elegant exterior to be anything other than the presentment, and most perfect correspondence of the man within. She believed that signs of beauty were signs of virtue. And when he, with that selfish passion of his, which loved to unfold the heart of woman, found hers, it lay under his hand so crystal fair and serene, that it touched his own with a certain tenderness, as though an angel had drawn near, and swept away the worldly maxims he had of late been so busy veneering there. This clearing up of the moral sense, by degrees led him quite out of his own selfish latitude, into her kingdom of light and love. Her innocent enthusiasm inspired him. Life, which was growing a stale, flat, and unprofitable morsel, began to have relish, and to feed his thoughts with a spicy, cordial, balm-breathing existence, that soothed and stimulated his jaded sense. Hour after hour he spent in the boudoir reading to her from the poets, in his low thrilling voice, or he talked with her in light, graceful, courteous banter; new and fascinating to her, watching her little hand as it threaded the silks, helping her, meanwhile, assiduously to weave the black pattern which should checker a good deal of the sunshine out of her life. Mrs. Wolfe, unmindful of her promise to watch over her happiness, and absorbed in a host of visitors, who were constantly coming and going, left her to receive the unremitting attentions of a man, who had

studied and was skilled in all the arts and wiles of successful blandishment. Just now, he did not have to simulate the ardor which his devotion expressed. Had there been one touch of worldliness or distrust in May's affluent, unspoiled nature, it would have broken the spell ; but as it was, she led him out of his old orbit to soar with her into that joyful region which her tender, over-wrought mind saw with the rapt serenity of an aspiring prophet. The human soul may well tremble when it feels the music of such overfull happiness. Such gratitude in the present, such unquestioning faith for the future, belongs to another life than this. There seemed no evil in the whole world to May's harmonious vision ; all was fair as when first looked upon and pronounced by God's eye, to be good. Even Death smiled in the distance with the joy of immortality, promised to the Blest.

A purer, more celestial dream of love, never dawned upon maiden. It imparted to her exquisitely bright manner, a reverence touching and impressive, as though she feared to lay hold of so much of heaven's unshaded joy as was proffered her. Her visit was drawing to a close. Already another week had been added to the first, and on the morrow she was to leave ; the last embroidery thread was drawn, the silver grapes, in abundant fruitage, hung upon the curtain's rosette border. Mrs. Wolfe was lavish of encomiums and caresses upon the young girl, then ran away upon one of her restless, fitful, gossiping expeditions. "Only to be absent, my love, for an hour or so," she said to her, as she was flying off. "There is one walk which you have not taken, it has some such pretty views of the river upon it, and leads to our little church ; will you go there while I am absent ? "

May assented, and Astonley saw her as she strayed down the path, her white robe gathering radiance in the sunshine ; saw her lean against the old gray rock and unwind a long wreath of the clematis, whose fine white buds and flowers grew wild and beautiful as can be in New England soil ; saw her throw the flowery arch, like a scarf, about her ; saw, too, the sky, like a blue jasper stone, over her head, and she, the fairest creature on earth ; and he must needs run, with rapid feet, and plead with his dark, shining, eloquent eyes, which held love's power and look in them, if not love's constancy. And May, who had never been taught a chilling thought of worldliness or expediency, or to distrust a human creature, believed him, and was left, as many are, to attest to the supremacy of a moment in influencing the weal or woe of years of after time.

He held out his hand to her, as he approached, with a grace that was a part of his conscious beauty, and drew hers through his arm, and slowly they sauntered by the rocky ledge, until they came in sight of a little church, which the straggling villagers had built as a gathering point for worship. Here they paused, and saw the minister enter, and, soon after, a quiet bridal party, calm and peaceful as the day ; there was only the bride and the bridegroom, and an elderly gentleman accompanying them. It seemed to Astonley like an instant revelation, lightning clear, that this was the moment in which to secure May and heaven. All the blood danced in his heart to an unknown time and measure ; all selfish thought for once was absolutely quenched, lost in complete thraldom to her innocence. He was new to himself. He was conscious of a sudden mounting of his will to its highest tide, and then came an overweening, exorbitant desire to rule her destiny

as he did that of every woman who pleased him, to arbitrate her future entirely to himself, as jealous of all prospective lovers, and driven on to claim her love exclusively. At all hazards she must be in his power.

He overwhelmed the inexperienced girl with words of fiery persuasion, with prayers, protestations, love, devotion, religion, constancy, all blended in one wild appeal of eloquence, until the green earth appeared to reel beneath her footing—old landmarks faded away. To go into the church, to detain the minister, to tell him that May was an orphan, that they wished to be married quietly; to still the clergyman's scruples, was, indeed, but the work of a moment. When he saw the lofty look which lit the young girl's brow with consecration, he was sure that the sacrament was holy to her. The good priest was something of a dreamer, too; an absent-minded man. He forgot to ask their names, but that he did not think of then.

Forth walked the bride, with a pale, but beaming look; but, as I live, one-half the fervid glow had died out of the bridegroom's face, as if, already, he was cognizant of the flight of a portion of that sudden flush of rapture which had swept him to an unknown height; but could not keep him from drifting back to his old material level. "O Time works miracles. In one hour many thousands of grains of sand run out; and quick as they, thought follows thought within the human soul." Silent, they retraced the path, and the silence was so sweet to May, she found no words wherewith to break it; and as they came in sight of the house, it was with an effort of looking and looking again, that she convinced herself that she saw any thing as real and like her former life as the old chaise from home, and Deborah seated within, evidently waiting, and looking

both heated and anxious, as she watched her young lady walk in from the shrubbery attended by a handsome young man.

There was something foreign to all illusion in Deborah's presence, and in the penetrating tones which told May that her mother had been rather more poorly of late, and had sent for her.

"Where is your box, Miss May? I will get it," and she followed the reluctant girl up stairs, when May suddenly turned and passed her like a flash; she went back and found Astonley standing on the verandah, just where she left him—her color went and came with her agitation:

"What must I do? My mother has sent for me. I cannot, if I would, detain Deborah from her."

He interrupted her:

"We shall soon meet again; keep our secret until I come to claim you. Promise me solemnly, promise me," he demanded nervously; "swear it, swear it by this ring," which he had placed upon her finger at the ceremony. "And now, for God's sake! go; the servants are watching us. We shall soon meet again, my beautiful one."

Poor little May! what a moment it was to her, as she drove off, with the experience of a lifetime locked in her young, innocent breast. Only thin bands of space seemed to hold her to her lover, whom she did not dare to turn to see. What wonder that a phantasm of unreality came and troubled her! She looked appealingly to Deborah, she longed for some sympathy; but this was no moment of tenderness with the good woman, who was sorely irked that May was not wholly delighted to return to the home where she had all her life been so happy.

The young girl sank back pained, bewildered, thoughtful, at the rapid transition of events. After several miles had elapsed she broke the silence by saying,—

“I quite forgot to leave my farewell, or ask the servants to tell Mrs. Wolfe why I left so hastily.”

“Shall we turn back?” inquired Deborah, with a sharp, quick accent.

“Oh! no, Debbie,” with her frank, sweet smile, “I do so long to see my mother.” The old woman was disarmed, and began to talk in her unhackneyed way.

“You know, Miss May, you are meat and drink, and sunshine to your mother, and she is pining for you, that is just what’s to pay with her; and when I drew her down in the garden chair the other day, she made me stop to listen to hear the wind rustle the corn. ‘Does it not sound like my darling’s little feet, when she comes flying in to greet me?’ she asked me. There’s nothing alive in the world for her, that has not May in it,” and then Deborah rambled on about a hundred domestic matters, and gradually May felt reassured, and when they had travelled the interspace of twelve miles and she saw the little brown house under the tree, and the kind, fond mother watching for her, she ran with an air of exquisite happiness to be enfolded in her arms, and to hear those half-broken exclamations which love fills out so satisfactorily.

As she sits by her mother’s sofa, oh! how she longed to pour out all her experience of the week, its sweetness, its beauty, its culminating perfection—for now she had arranged all so satisfactorily in her mind. On the morrow she was sure Astonley would come, and how happy it would make her mother to know that

there was some one beside herself, to love and care for her little daughter. And how her mother would admire him! she would understand every thing the instant she saw him. Her little self-accusations and faint-heartedness had fled, and such faith she had in her lover, she felt strong, and chid herself for her lack of courage, when so suddenly parted from him. And she looked up and suppressed the glad secret, and with a certain sweetness of complacency denied her tongue its full utterance, its ardent longing, and then went on to talk of Mrs. Wolfe, of her home, the river, the walks, the moonlight, of their occupations—when she came, half inadvertently, to the name of her lover, a rosy consciousness overspread her face.

“And the young man, is he a relative of Mrs. Wolfe?” inquired her mother.

“I think not; he is an Englishman, who brought letters to Mr. Wolfe. Some business which links them together; he was awaiting the return of Mr. Wolfe from Canada.”

“And where did you embroider?”

“In the boudoir at the end of the drawing-room.”

“And Mrs. Wolfe, was she with you there?”

“Yes, she was there, that is, she flitted in and out; she does not like to remain quiet in one place long, you know, mother.”

“And this young man,—was he with you very often?”

“Yes, mother.”

“Did you say he was a plain, elderly man; a companion of Mr. Wolfe?”

“Plain, elderly, oh! he is young and handsome, and so good and agreeable, Mrs. Wolfe thinks there was never any one to equal him.”

“And does my little daughter expect to see him here?” and Mrs. Temple bent an anxious look upon May.

“I hope he will come,” she replied, with simple candor.

“And if he should not?”

“But I know he will,” was the reply, accompanying the assertion with a glance at her mother, so blushing and joyful, that the latter refrained further comment, lest she might sow anxiety in her daughter’s mind.

“I will rest now, May; you run and arrange your drawers neatly, or tie up your carnations,—they are waiting for you.”

CHAPTER XIII.

H O P E.

MANY anxious thoughts circled about the mother's pillow that night, and wakened her at an earlier hour than usual ; she was dressed and down stairs—she looked for May. In the dining-room the windows had been raised to let in the soft September air ; a bouquet of monthly roses, with spears of last year's golden wheat intermingled, was placed on the table by her plate. May had been out thus early among the flowers, then ! Mrs. Temple looked in the library for her ; she was standing in the broad window seat, arranging flowers in an old-fashioned wicker basket that hung from the window ; the morning sun stole through the great branches of the elm, reflecting a maze of waving shadows upon her light robe, and enwrapping her, like a wood nymph, in a garment of foliage ; the delicious dream which lay in her heart, overspread her features with an ideal lustre, and cast them in a dawn of love, bright as the opening day. Mrs. Temple could not speak, for the pleasure she found in contemplating her delicate loveliness. Her work was finished ; quickly she turned, and running to her, “ Why, mother—how early you are, and so pale too ? Oh ! the world is so fair, God must have breathed upon it fresh this morning. The perfect air will revive you ; sit there, mother,”

placing her in a chair ; and, throwing herself at her feet, she opened the Prayer-Book and read the lesson for the day, as her mother loved to have her.

“ There ! you are better already,—and here comes Deborah to call us to breakfast. First look about, and tell me, mother, if my bouquets are not pretty, and if you do not think I have arranged every thing to the best advantage ; and does it not please you ? ”

“ And are you not thinking of pleasing some one else, too ? ”

“ Yes, I would like that that he should think it looks pleasant here too, and that the elm tree, the old garden, the brook, and the woods beyond, should seem as beautiful to him as they do to me. Is there any harm in wishing it ? ” she asked, with a winning, wistful look.

“ In truth, I trust not ; but think how simple our home is, in comparison with the costly mansions and gardens and lawns which invite his admiration elsewhere ; and, suppose that he should not come, will you be just as happy as you were before you met this pleasant stranger ? You see that your mother is jealous, and fears a rival—but Deborah has called us twice to breakfast.”

September fulfilled her days, October mornings came and went, the earth neither stayed in its course, nor hastened to orbit its accustomed path more rapidly. Hours tolled out their stroke to the full minute, until nearly two years had passed away, and Norman Astonley came not, neither did he reveal himself by word or token.

We will not recount all the young girl’s trials during the first period of sore suspense—its fitful hopes and fears—its irresolute anguish ; its gnawing dread.

The following was a letter which came to May from Mrs. Wolfe, two months after her ill-fated visit :

“ I send you a few words, Dear May, to tell you of our immediate departure for the continent. Mr. Wolfe’s business calls him abroad, and I am but too happy to avail myself of all the advantages for my son which such an absence will afford. For myself, you know I prefer a quiet life. Your friend and admirer, Mr. Astonley, has been south since you left us, until the last three weeks, when he favored us again with his agreeable society. He sails with us in the same steamer for England. If he knew that I were writing you, he would doubtless add his particular regards ; and I have often thought, that if any thing could have tempted him to give up his ambitious views and luxurious inclinations, (but that a Peri could not do,) he would have made you an offer of his hand.

“ With love to your mother, and the most affectionate attachment to your pretty self, believe me, now as ever, your unalterable and devoted friend,

“ CORNELIA WOLFE.”

Deborah saw that May was walking away beyond the orchard, when this letter arrived for her. “ The child loves to be by herself, now, and how pale she has grown since her luckless visit to that deceitful woman. But she’d rather read this alone, and I’ll take it to her ; ” she ended her soliloquy by addressing May :

“ A pretty goose-chase you lead your old nurse, when a letter comes for you,” she exclaimed, handing it to her. As she turned to walk away, she heard a suppressed, withering cry, and looking back she saw that May had fallen and lay insensible on the grass. She raised her in her arms, and carrying her to the brook sat down and sprinkled a few drops of water

upon her forehead. "Oh! God o' mercy; I am glad I brought the letter out here. It never would have done for her mother to have seen her cut down so. They have just killed her, with their flashy ways: poor babe, poor babe," she cried, rocking her to and fro in her arms; "she's got her trouble now, like the rest of us; born to suffer; could ye not have spared her, Dear Jesus, a little while longer; she's so young yet."

"Oh! Debbie," cried a little faint, broken voice. "Hold me here until I die, won't you? That letter hurt me so. Can I ever get over it;" and she moaned low to herself, as if she would keep her suffering down.

"Yes, out of sorrow comes strength, and a mighty deliverance from the flesh, which wars against the spirit."

"But it was so wicked in me to let my heart stray away from God, and my mother, and you. It did not seem wrong to love. I thought love was so loving and holy and pure; and already he has forgotten me, and is going to England. I shall never see him again."

"So much the better, if he is a false hypocrite; he would have perverted your innocent life. It is an awful thing to be linked to an unholy spirit."

A convulsive passion of sobs was her only answer.

"Dear Miss May, if you would not shorten your mother's days," said Deborah, with a lofty solemnity of manner, "you must rise up and face this trouble, as the Lord commanded Ezekiel the prophet, when he took from him the desire of his eyes." 'Yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down: forbear to weep; make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet.' And now, lest your mother

should miss us both, and be anxious, I will go ; and yet, you know that I shall be thinking of you all the time, for your sorrow is my sorrow." And Deborah went away, and never dreamed how deep was May's cause for self-reproach.

May walked slowly over the sad autumnal fields until, weary, she sat down upon a knoll, and looked mournfully around her. Far as the eye could reach, she was sole occupant of the far extent of pasture and woodland. It was a fine, still, November evening. The sun was setting without a cloud. The landscape wore a sterile beauty. Here, where she had seen the gorgeous show of summer resign itself to gloom, must she bid a final farewell to the memory of that kindling smile, which had made tenfold summer in her heart; to the voice which thrilled her memory with its tenderness. No more between her and the heavens must stand the form of him who had sworn to cling to her until death; for well she knew now, how ephemeral, how void and vain had been his proffer of affection. She felt the united wrong and humiliation of his false faith. She *must* dethrone this idol, to whom she had trusted so implicitly, and imprudently. In this, lay all her future hope of tranquillity. Poignant and bitter was the nepenthe she held to her lips; womanly pride, honor, self-respect, rose up and demanded that she should quench the false splendor with which she had invested this man whom now she was but too well convinced would never return to claim her.

She had been so happy with her mother before Mrs. Wolfe came and enticed her away, and left her to the wiles of this unprincipled man,—could she not be happy again? at least, she would not be so wicked and selfish as to embitter her mother's precarious existence, by

her incessant regrets to that mother, to whose tender love and devotion she now turned for consolation. And cleaving her soft, nestling woman's heart in twain, she buried low in the dust all the light of her first love. Had Norman Astonley appeared to her then and there, she would have turned from him as cold and unheeding as the twilight star, which had just come forth, and hung on the borders of day.

She felt like a spirit, as she walked home in the twilight, she was so bereft of all earthly anticipation. The light of life waxed so dim, only her heart moaned and trembled, as the billows return to rest after the storm is over.

At last, she entered the house, but in spite of herself, her resignation had so changed every look, her mother felt how constrained was each motion and word; how chilled the glow of her face. Every energy of the mother's heart burst forth to sustain, encourage, and bring her daughter back to her former joyous sympathies.

CHAPTER XIV.

Q U A L M S.

NEVER, during Norman Astonley's life, had he been so completely turned away from all selfish considerations, as when he surrendered himself to the influence of a sweeter and purer nature than his own. For a brief period, it created his perverted being anew. His dead soul arose and came forth, to hearken to its possibilities, to grasp at its heavenly birthright. While under this influence, an all-inspiring Intelligence appeared to await on his footsteps, moulded nature into such new and lovely aspects, as might have filled Eden itself with bloom and beauty. The heart of childhood throbbed in his bosom. He longed to surrender himself forever to the guidance of those aspirations, which seemed like the breath of life to the fair innocent girl, who listened to his words and went to the altar, and there pledged him her life-troth. May's sudden departure left his mind to the invasion of worldly thoughts and hollow moralities. He parleyed with the temptation that assaulted him, and which told him of the great blunder he had committed, in marrying an obscure parson's daughter. Was this to be the end of his ambition? How his rich, proud friends, would sneer and coldly laugh, when they heard that he had settled down to earn bread and butter for a country girl. More and more dim grew the outline of that better life which

might have been, until he had blotted the vision and quite defaced the divine imprint. And his spirit turned and joined alliance with the tempter.

He began to hate the young girl who had beguiled him, as he termed it, into a marriage which he determined he never would acknowledge.

He laughed at his folly ; he scoffed at what he termed "his ridiculous, insane episode, and temporary alienation of common sense," and finally, cursed the whole affair as an utter delusion. After this rejection of the higher life, which had beckoned him, he became a colder-hearted man, more subtle, more regardless of means to gain his ends, more determined to secure to himself some heiress, whose ample fortune should insure to him the unfailing ministrations of his ruling passion —his passion for luxury. When he had thus cast more secure anchorage in favor of temporalities, all the baser elements came to his aid, glossed his manners in triple folds of elegant insincerity, smoothed his tongue with polished sentences, and taught him to counterfeit the appearance of all the virtues. After an absence of two years in England, he arrived at Boston one December day, and we have seen how he presented himself to his relations.

Skilled, as a necromancer, in all the ways to win a woman's heart, regardless of his previous marriage, he began to weave his subtlest web to lure his cousin's love. Beauty, high culture, great riches, what more could he desire ? Her indifference piqued and stimulated him to the highest pitch of endeavor.

Cathara felt his influence agreeable enough to induce her to give a tacit consent to his visits. This, together with her uncle's ardent longing to see her

united to him, influenced her to yield her consent to visit his sister in the old chateau by the sea.

But, before August, she must have solitude and rest; and without apprising even her cousin, she set out for Graston, one morning, accompanied only by her maid. Great was her cousin's chagrin when, upon calling at her residence, he was told that "Miss Clyde had left town."

"And where had she gone?"

The butler did not know; and it was with an air of the deepest mortification that Astonley turned upon his heel, inwardly chafing at a woman's unaccountable caprice. "But she shall not escape me," he muttered; "I have staked all upon this die, and who can withstand a man's strong will?"

CHAPTER XV.

CATHARA AND MAY.

- CATHARA loved her new sequestered home, the comfortable old-fashioned house, its spacious, entangled garden, dark with box, and vines, and flowers, and vegetables, growing in untrained abundance together. The sleeping shadows of the trees in the large orchard ; the meadows, like a carpet of green velvet, outspread beyond ; the silence of the brooding woods which consecrated the slant hill-sides ; the boundless horizon of blue ; the beauty-brimming days ; the dew of the morn ; the freshness of eve ; the gleam and shade were sources of exquisite happiness to her. They kindled an enthusiasm of silent, inexpressible enjoyment, to which, she thought, the presence of any one of all she had ever met, would have been felt as an intrusion, would have dissipated the spell which wound about and held her faculties. Old Mr. Somerton, pure-lived and simple as a child, in the quiet and loneliness of the country about him, rejoiced to see Paul's cheek grow brown, his weak limbs become lithe and active, and his spirits assuming the healthy tone of a manly boy.

It was grateful to Cathara to feel the old man's eyes follow her with a constant benediction. He fully understood her desire to be free and alone, and she went in and out ; sometimes, for days, only a few words

were exchanged, but many pleasant looks attested how much they *might* have spoken.

She had come in one morning from an early ramble, and feeling not a little self-congratulatory that she had chosen a home so isolated, she lingered upon the verandah still longer, to please her eyes with the details of the landscape, when a slight sound arrested her attention. She turned and saw an old one-horse chaise being slowly driven up the lane. She made a gesture of discomfiture to Mr. Somerton, (who was busy tying and trimming vagrant shoots of wild-briar rose,) and pointed to the approaching vehicle.

“Some troublesome neighbors, I fear,” she whispered, and was about making her retreat, when the chaise turned in full view, and one glance at the occupants arrested, instantly, her flying footsteps. There was something that touched Cathara’s heart in the face of the elder lady; it was so subdued, as if sorrow and sickness had purified, and consumed, as with fire, all trace of the earth-born passions. Neither pride, nor vanity, nor curiosity, looked out of her large, dark, soft-shining, spiritual eyes. And it was easy to see that she was very frail, that her hold on life was slender, that she must have suffered, and yet those calmly-enduring lips wore not a trace of peevishness, and though unused to smile often, yet was their expression sweetness itself. So completely absorbed had Cathara been in contemplating this peaceful face, that she quite forgot to glance at her companion, until she saw her standing near, and heard her say, “Mr. Somerton, my mother claims you as an old friend; she is not able to get out of the chaise; will you be so good as to come down and see her?”

“My friend, Clara Bayard,” exclaimed the old man, as he ran quickly down the steps.

“Sit a moment, will you?” asked Cathara, who felt irresistibly attracted to detain the young girl. There was such poetic completeness in her delicate expressive features and lovely bloom; the graceful brow set off by the flossy tendrils of her most luxuriant and beautiful hair; and then her smile, that did not now, as once, lead her spirit up to her face as at full tide of joy, but turned aside to make betrothal with some hidden experience which had left a pensive touch, and lent a tenfold charm.

May was flitting back to her mother, when Cathara spoke:

“Have you driven far this morning?”

“Only from the little brown house under the tree.”

“Under the beautiful tree! I have copied both house and tree, for my portfolio. I thought the little house wore such a cloistral air.”

“We take it so kindly when any one praises our tree,” May replied, while her eyes rested with a look of entire admiration upon Cathara’s face; “we have learned to fancy that the faithful old elm has a heart, and knows that we love it.”

“Trees have a personality; they stand for poets with me,” said Cathara, while her fingers plaited migonette and sweet peas together, and handed them to May.

“Then we have lived under the shadow of a great poet all our lives,” taking the flowers, and smiling back her thanks.

“Tell me about him,” demanded Cathara, with playful earnestness. “Is he a true Poet? Does he point aloft to Heaven? Does he play with wind and storm? Is he a Paradise full of singing birds? Does he keep watch with the Moon? Has he glooms and

ecstacies ? Does he refuse to grow according to mode ? Does he make pictures of shadows ? Does he kiss the Sun, and hold the dropping stars ? ”

“ Yes, all that,” answered May, “ and yet he clings to earth with a perfect passion.”

“ Ah ! he must have substratum ; he strikes deep down into the heart of things ; he wants to get a firm foot upon the earth. He is no Keats, no Chatterton. He is Dante, and has his *Purgatorio*, which is darkness, as well as his light and growth, which are *Paridiso*.”

“ Are you ready, May ? ” called Mrs. Temple to her daughter.

May turned with a sudden abandon, “ Will you speak with my mother for a moment, it would be sad for her not to see such as you,” and her color rose as she thought of the compliment her words implied.

“ You do not intend, then, to invite me to enter the little brown house ? ”

“ Yes, yes, over and over, if you will come ; will you ? ”

“ I will,” responded Cathara, as she drew near the chaise, and exchanged a few words with Mrs. Temple.

As they drove off, May whispered, “ Mother, she is coming to see us. Is not her face inspiring ? ”

“ Yes, May, it will be something to long for, until we see her again.” Then, after a pause, “ I wonder how it is that Mr. Somerton has come to be a pensioner of this young lady’s bounty. He spoke of her as his best friend, and when I inquired for his daughter, Mrs. Wolfe, he looked pained and embarrassed.”

“ Is he Mrs. Wolfe’s father ? ”

“ Yes.”

Nothing more was said ; both were serious ; each was preoccupied with a different class of thoughts, un-

til, as they approached homeward, they saw Deborah waving a letter in her hand. A letter was a rare occurrence. "Who can it be from?" said May, her heart beating quick and full in a moment.

"It is from my nephew, your cousin, Pierre Bayard, and in a few days he proposes to make us a visit."

"Let us mark the day with a white stone," said May; "first, that we have seen that beautiful Miss Clyde, and then to think of Pierre's coming; my cousin, of whom you have told me all my life. How happy you will be to see him, won't you, dearest mother?" and she stooped down and kissed her. "Does he really look like the portrait of my uncle in the library?"

"Yes, quite like, when a mere boy; since which time I have not seen him. What a merry boy he was, then. Tell Deborah to get ready the guest chamber; it has had no occupant since his father, my dear brother Charles, paid us his last visit. How many years have flown since then! This glossy fragment of his hair" (opening the drawer, as she sat down by her work-table, and taking it out) "once hung upon his forehead. It is as burnished and silken now, as then. While all but his spirit has returned to dust, this still thrills me with a sense of his nearness," and sinking back into her chair, she stroked the fair lock and mourned, as only those mourn, who keep alive and fresh the tender recollection, the hallowed memory, the far-off cadence of a voice, a name, a look, a word, that is no more of earth, but a part of that vague bourne we wot not of.

Cathara smiled at her own readiness to enter into a friendship with a stranger, when she was shrinking

from making even an acquaintance. But true it was, that she felt daily attracted to the little brown house under the tree. It was so stainless and orderly in its immaculate keeping. She loved the library, its old books and quaint furniture; the gleams of spirit which clothed the time-mellowed portraits with a haunting charm; the soft and dreamy gloom which stole from the tall spires of the giant tree and transfused its rare light through the windows, while its myriad leaves were haunted by summer air, forever singing her murmuring modulations of ritual. The mother and daughter, so fair to her eyes, intuitive of her thoughts, instinctive in their sympathy; their innate self-respect, their religious aspirations; their enthusiasm for the beautiful in thought, the poetic in action; their simplicity and unworldliness; their fastidiousness in excluding personalities or commonplace comments; their tender love for each other, all served to invest the place and its inmates with a deep, quiet, nameless charm. And then what a welcome they gave to their new *friend*. Rare word for them! Friendship has its beatitudes, its inspiration, its romance, its spell of delicious serenity, its thrall and expectation, as well as love.

Who shall say which is best?

How pleasant their walks were! May taught Cathara a new admiration for the various tribes of birds, their forms, the delicacy of their wings, their curious instincts, their powers of observation. Together they admired the wheat-ears, the tasselled corn, the pine-cones from the wood, the acorns from the trees, gathered in their rambles, which extended far and wide. May beguiled her to all sorts of out of the way haunts, sometimes to show her a spark-

ling rivulet, flowing over black, shining pebbles, into whose pellicid mirror, as they bent over to look down, they saw reflected their own exquisite faces. Cathara looked at May's and smiled; May smiled upon Cathara's; dipping their hands and sporting with the pebbles, as they might have done in childhood, had either possessed a sister. Sometimes they clambered over rocks, in whose fissures grew masses of the golden rod, silver moss and ferns; to a ravine of wild beauty, where nature veiled herself, her plants, flowers, rocks, trees, and water, in a seclusion, guarded, silent, sweet. Here they delighted to watch the scarlet lizards and golden beetles that glided and buzzed among odd specimens of plants, and weeds, and brambles, that some idle wind had dispersed, and nature had given them leave to rest there. May often found and plucked crimson wild poppies, and twined them in Cathara's hair. Sometimes they followed the water-course until it grew deeper and more silent; hollowing out for itself a chasm, over which the tall trees leaned and measured their huge forms like spectres, giving an illimitable depth to the fretted gulf. Here, as they sat upon the moss-covered rocks, (with a refined sense of sympathy going from one to the other, like hidden music, or the scent of wild flowers, or any lurking sweetness that nourishes the spirit,) happy and observant of the summer's splendor; or watched the grace of the swallows as they waltzed and winged in fleeting fantasias far beyond their utmost rim of sight, how little they recked that the black thread of their lives—their greatest trial—was to be wrought out by one and the same hand; they, too, who thought their lives so disconnected.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE WOODS.

At length Pierre arrived, one evening, just as the moon had drenched the tree-tops with silver, and the air was enriched with the breath of the neighboring orchards.

“I was almost afraid to venture within such fairy-like precincts,” said Pierre, kissing his aunt and cousin affectionately. “Is this the way, dear aunt, that you deck your home in emerald and dew-drops, moonshine and dusky boscage, to attract poor travellers? A simple denizen of brick and mortar, like myself, is quite overcome. I confess I begin to feel a nascent susceptibility in behalf of elves and Titanias.”

May was delighted with the animated tones of her cousin’s voice, the play of his puzzling expression and knightly air. She could not help wondering what Miss Clyde would think of her tall, spirited cousin.

The following day proved rainy. Pierre discussed family reminiscences with his aunt, looked over old letters, answered odd questions which May put to him about garrison life and various forts, etc.

“What a charming little cousin she is,” said Pierre, meditating; “and what a sweet home she would make, with her unspoiled ways and bright intelligence; and were it not for that vision which lights my brain with a golden glow, and to which, alone, my heart

yields its tide of fealty, it might hasten to woo this little cousin. But now, oh beautiful dream! come back," and he paced the room in an abstraction which lasted some minutes, and at which May looked up and speculated.

"What divine bewitchment is this?" thought Pierre; recollecting, and seating himself by the side of his cousin, he amused himself in turning over the little balls of embroidery silk which lay in her work-basket. "Do forgive me, Ladye May, for oscillating about your library like a pendulum. Don't think I am fretting, like a caged animal. I am happy, too happy here; there is something new and strange in the contralto that tunes every leaf of your sheltering tree. It plays upon my heart-strings, and conjures up a memory fairer than all earth's empiry."

"Oh, cousin Pierre! I had hoped," exclaimed May, involuntarily.

"Hoped what?" he responded, in quick astonishment.

"Hoped," she replied, with a shade of embarrassment, "that you had never seen any one that you admired quite so much. You have toppled down my air-castle."

"What can she mean? It is not possible that she can be so frank," thought Pierre, as he furtively watched her changing face.

"I had made a selection for you, cousin Pierre," said May, breaking the silence.

"Oh fie, little May, turned matchmaker! would you accord me that privilege for you? My brother, for instance?"

"No, no," cried May, looking up, laughing, and running away.

The next morning broke cloudlessly.

“I hope, aunt, you are inclined to be indulgent,” said Pierre, as he rose from the breakfast table and went to the porch, “for I feel like sinking down into inglorious ease, upon the green turf, and becoming permeated with summer’s regality. To lie on this billowy grass and gaze up into nature’s broad tent, with you and cousin May, out of doors, to help me sing psaems of joy, is the utmost reach of my ambition.”

“You may indulge in all the delights of pastoral fancy,” interposed May, “if you will but accord me two hours of the day.”

“Wherefore?”

“Oh, I will tell you the plan after we set out.”

“Have we got to *set out* for something? Alas! what a restless, moving world this is!”

Mrs. Temple’s fond eyes dwelt with delight upon the cousins, as she saw them pass out of the gate, and when she called after her daughter,—

“May, try and find some of the mountain laurel for me,” it was more to get another glance at her daughter’s lovely, happy face, than a desire for the flowers.

How sweetly she turned and nodded her graceful head, once and again. Life is made up of little things, “and he who despiseth them,” saith the prophet Esdras, “shall perish little by little.”

“Are we going to the woods? Then I am reconciled,” exclaimed Pierre, as they crossed the orchard, the brook, the meadow, and began to climb the hill-side.

“Yes, and if we should meet there a Druidess treading the forest shade, are you prepared, in the triple armor of that ‘glorious memory,’ to abide the result?”

“And, withal, a rosy-cheeked beauty, a village belle, and a coquette, I dare say. It is neither kind nor cousinly in you to expose me.”

“Not at all. She never alludes to one of your kind, I doubt if she has ever seen one.”

“And who is to answer for the effect *I* shall produce upon her unsophisticated heart ?”

“Are men really so vain ?” inquired May, with a smile.

“Aye, even vainer. But spare me a list of this fair wood-nymph’s perfections, and simply breathe her name,” looking up, half ironically, to the sky.

“You need not affect indifference,” said May; “I feel a presentiment that you will be vanquished in a moment.” A fresh wind was blowing, and bowed the great branches of the wood. The plaintive murmurs of the trees hushed the sound of their footsteps, as also did the ferns, lichens, and mosses interwoven with the pine tassels which strewed the ground. Suddenly, May felt her arm compressed tightly, to prevent her advancing a step, until her cousin had satisfied the enthusiasm of curiosity, which contracted his eyes into glittering points of eager vision; for, under the tall shafts, Cathara was reclining in a hammock, which Paul had secured to two pines. Her dress was transparent muslin of deep violet, and its abundant folds fell down close to the slender feet, which were crossed, leaving visible the exquisite rise of the instep. Her face was raised, the head thrown back upon the rolled-up folds of a crimson shawl. The dark hair was turned over a broad violet ribbon, whose fringed ends floated upon the breeze with her hair, which the wind had partly unbound; one long tress alone, rippling its dusky velvet shadow down the long fair throat and sloping

shoulder. Her eyes were bent upon a book, from which she read: "The rhyme of the Duchess May." An infinite calm was upon her features. The tone of her voice smote, like a chime, upon the heart of Bayard. It sent the tide of life leaping through his veins with an unknown acceleration. Was he stone, before, that he should now feel such an accession of glowing existence? What was this new sense that was unsealing his soul, like a fountain, and impelling his whole being towards her in silent ecstasy—that overwhelmed him like a sea, with whose waves he had no strength to do battle? At this moment Cathara heard an exclamation from Paul, and turning, she saw May standing with a gentleman.

"Pray allow me, Miss Clyde, to introduce to you my cousin Pierre," said May, coming forward.

A wave of rosy color fleeted over Cathara's face.

"Your cousin!" she exclaimed, and laying one hand upon Paul's shoulder, she sprang lightly from the hammock.

"We have, I fear, disturbed your morning's seclusion; and all those little birds that sang east and west, in the poem," began Pierre.

"Oh! the wood is full of such poets: see there," replied the young girl, following with her eyes a crested blue jay, as he hopped his way higher and higher to the topmost verging twig.

Pierre's faculties were quite paralyzed. Spell-bound by the unexpected meeting, he only heard vaguely, as she said, turning to him,

"Our forest is not so dense, but as cool with green solitudes, and blithe with birds, as the good greenwood of that worthy Robin Hood."

"What can ail cousin Pierre?" thought May, as she

contrived to give his arm a touch, by way of hint, that he was still in this world.

“Ah,” he said, collecting himself with an effort, “Robinson Crusoe was an extremely interesting fellow.”

All laughed.

“We were not speaking of Robinson Crusoe, but Robin Hood,” said May.

Pierre colored ; then rallied :

“At all events, it is impossible for me to think of, or to envy, past foresters, or merry men in hunting green, or all the elves that ever sported through fairy woodland. Suffice it for me, to be the ranger of the forest-aisles of the present century.” Then changing the subject, “Is there not something infatuating in this wild, odorous air ? It is like the presence of a beautiful soul. And pray, what can be prettier than this golden carpet of fresh-strewn pine needles ? ” sitting down upon a log, and turning them over with his boot, “unless it be those white silky wood-moths that hover about you, Miss Clyde ? ” looking at one, as it rested, for an instant, upon the string of her gypsy hat ; and then he gazed upward, as if to measure the tall shafts through whose interlacement the sunbeams failed to pierce, except in long, fine, slanting threads.

“When the winds ruffle the trees, is it not just like the sound of a waterfall ? ” asked May, taking a seat near her cousin, “or a dirge,” she added, “as if something were to be repented of, in the universe ? ”

“Is it a secret that nature bewails and conceals ? ” responded Cathara ; (these words troubled May,) “or is it something that she longs to tell us ; of a sorrow that is better than happiness ; something majestic and sweet, could she but strike the key-note of our muffled

sympathies, our senses are so dull that we can only accept the hints which the cipher offers. Only so much, no more; a drop of music; a glimpse of the immutable; a moment of splendor; and the celestial current flows away, leaving us to grope again."

"And yet," said Pierre, "we can afford to grope, since we do have presentiments of heaven that often make this life an inspired reality. Shall we take the path through the wood?" he added, seeing that Cathara rose, and waited for them.

"Yes; and yet the view from the other side I have not seen."

"We will go, then," said Pierre. "Is this the way, cousin? It looks like the secret path of the beautiful, or an Indian's trail, or a squirrel's track, each and all," he said, smilingly, as he led on with elastic step.

"Long summer days are so pleasant," said Paul, following reluctantly, for he was quite entranced by the gambols of two squirrels, whose graceful feats of leaping from branch to bough, he longed greatly to emulate.

"Excitable, valiant, cheerful little souls," exclaimed Pierre, stopping, with his usual urbanity, to let Paul look at another comic fellow.

The party walked on after this in silence, Pierre pushing aside the branches, here and there, to make the path smooth. At length, Paul spoke plaintively, "Oh! how sorry I am that we are out of the wood; I was hoping that we might meet a goblin, such as I read of the other day."

"But goblins are evil spirits, my dear child; you would not like to meet an evil spirit, would you?" demanded Cathara.

“If it were young and very pretty, I might.”

Cathara and May exchanged a glance.

From the edge of the woodland, the ground rapidly descended. It was bare, stony, and barren of vegetation, and sank down into a deep gorge, where stunted shrubs and dwarf evergreens, and a wild growth of bramble, made a waste of it.

“There,” said Bayard, “is a fit resort for your goblins, Paul. At the coming on of twilight it would not be difficult to see a score of them.”

“A wild, uncanny place; but is not the gloomy grandeur of the forest beyond, picturesque?” said May, “and on the right, how very pretty the wheat and rye fields look. Do, cousin Pierre, set your pencil to sketch the wildness of the old tangled forest and glen.”

Pierre sat down upon a rock, and taking a blank leaf from his sketch-book, began to line in the landscape with rapid, bold, vigorous strokes.

Cathara could look over his shoulder as she stood. The drawing pencil seemed magical in his long, slender fingers. The thought that this beautiful woman was leaning near him, now stimulated, as it had previously stilled, his faculties. It inspired him to put point and spirit into his drawing. Wild fern and shaggy rock, rude glen, dark shadow and moving cloud, drifting wind, and bending tree—he had caught the loneliness of the place. All was solitary. The beautiful gazer, attracted by his skill in a region foreign to her own talent, unconsciously drew nearer and nearer to watch him. It was like a story to her, each stroke a sentence. Her lips parted with a smile at his skilful work. Pierre felt her delicious breath fluctuate upon his cheek, more intoxicating and vague than the sweet south wind in

early spring-time. He would fain have prolonged the moment.

At last he paused, sprang to his full height, then bending, he offered the sketch to Cathara.

"Pray keep it, if you think it has any merit."

"How very clever," she said, taking it; "a masterly sketch! How do you contrive to make the spirit of the landscape so intelligible?"

"I know not how it is," said Pierre, half evasively. "The world seems strangely intelligible this morning; the heavens call and the earth replies," and he rested his eyes upon her with a look of such lofty, intense regard, that the young girl, feeling a new emotion stealing over her, involuntarily shaded her eyes to avoid its power.

Following a winding path about the brow of the hill, still screened by the trees from the hot sun, they came, once more, in sight of the garden and orchard of the Rectory, and Cathara's adjoining home.

"And who lives there?" asked Pierre, pointing in the direction of this latter place.

"Miss Clyde," answered May.

"Yes," said Cathara, "and if you will come a little nearer, I will show you the rosy flush that is kindling over our apples; and our pumpkins ripening to gold."

"Do you find fairy godmothers among the latter?" inquired Pierre.

"Yes, as potent to grant me my desires as those who served Cinderella."

After they separated, May asked Pierre, in a whisper, if he had "ever imagined any thing half so accomplished, fascinating, or beautiful?"

"Certainly not."

"Then she takes precedence over the past, does she?" inquired May, not a little triumphant for her friend.

"She and the past are one."

"Oh, Pierre! then it is my friend whom you love?"

"Yes, but forbear, sweet Coz; report says that she has a lover, handsome, wealthy, accomplished; and I, May, am only a soldier."

"Ah! please wait, Cousin Pierre, while I gather these bunches of laurel. These pink and white waxy flowers spread their clusters like sprays of pearls, they are so pretty."

The young officer paused in the midst of his love-dream, to help her select the choicest specimens. There was not a grain of selfishness in his composition, and he would have gone any distance to have gathered a flower that would have gratified his aunt.

CHAPTER XVII.

A SERENADE.

PIERRE BAYARD was a direct descendant of that illustrious Pierre du Terrail Bayard, whose name glows as it runs along the plane of history, as the *Chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*.

There is much that is curious and suggestive in tracing the characteristics of a strong progenitor, as they appear in several successive generations. There was enough in the ardent play of expression, the quick penetrating glance, the open candor of the clear brow, the graceful movements of the tall figure, suggestive enough of those fine traits, which made it natural and pleasant to look back a century, and let his name ring harmoniously with that *gentilhomme* of a bygone day. Pierre came, naturally, into the profession of arms. His father had followed it, and at an early age the youth was entered as a cadet. To Pierre it was left to carve out his own path, and maintain his younger brother. A certain lofty pride was inwrought into Bayard's mental organization, which spurred him on to claim pre-eminence in his studies and in the accomplishments pertaining to the profession of arms. His comrades adored him for his generosity and daring. His great spirits made him a favorite. He was called the best-natured fellow in the army. It was a perfect delight to May to hear her cousin's light step dash

down the staircase. She felt akin to his merry moods; she quite forgot, under all the genial influences about her, the dark experience which had crossed her life.

The day after their excursion to the wood, the morning came in so balmy, that Bayard wheeled his aunt's lounge out of doors, threw himself at her feet, and then inquired—

“Cousin May, what is the order of the day? I never should have thought of asking such a question if I were in the same uninitiated state of mind that I was when I came to you; then I could have languished all day by the brook, or stretched under this monarchy of boughs, contemplated the eternal growth of this old tree, and mused upon vegetative forms in general, and right good pastime I should have found it. But you chose to lead me away from this amiable meditation, to incite my imagination with the spell of forest life; show me a young maiden more beautiful than the rays of morning; after that, can you expect me to creep back like a parasite, a mere fungus or mushroom, and nestle among roots and grasses? I hate to overstate my case, but you see something must be done. I feel a little desperate, for you are preparing for a bivouac of some kind, and leaving me prostrate and desolate as tearful Niobe. Where are you going? if the question is not unwelcome.”

“I must go to my school.”

“What school?”

“A dozen charity scholars, whom I instruct three times a week.”

“Can't you give the little wretches a holiday? Do turn their faculties loose to graze awhile.”

“And what then?” said May, provokingly, for she knew where his wishes tended.

“ Oh ! a woman’s resources are endless.”

“ What do you say to a real home tea, out under the arbor ? ” she responded.

“ With beauty invited, under the shelter of age, attended by youth, it is just the most felicitous plan in the world. Any corn to be thrashed, or chaff winnowed for the occasion, I am at your service, serene and docile for the lowest duty. Wait, until I have written a programme. You will see, I am practical about these domestic arrangements.”

And taking out his pencil and a blank leaf from his drawing-book, he wrote—

“ Tea-table under leafy arbor ;
Armorial mugs and jugs assembled thereon ;
Dishes to be dressed with botanical wreaths ;
Garland of roses in front of arbor ;
Confectioned by artillery officer on leave of absence, on
a summer’s ramble in the country.

Order of Procession.

“ Amiable Aunt led in by Old Gentleman.

Beautiful girl upon the arm of artillery officer on
leave of absence, &c.

Ladye May escorted by handsome boy.”

May went off twining a branch of ivy carelessly about her wrist, without giving him any definite encouragement. She, however, dismissed her school with rather a shorter allowance of instruction than usual, ran over to Summer Dell, invited her friends, and then hastened back to assist Deborah in sundry preparations of sugar, flour and eggs, whose results appeared in cake, poetised by sugar icings, conjured into a resemblance to hoar frost. Her dimpled arms were flour to the elbow, her little pink hands patted the dough

into a lightness which amused her mother, who sat watching and enjoying. "She is as blithe now as she ever was," thought the happy mother.

The tea-table was spread under the arbor of grape leaves, bright beams fluttered about the ancient silver tea-service, the garden was redolent of perfume, the garland of roses hung at the entrance, under which, leaning upon Bayard's arm, Cathara walked, smiling demurely. Through the farther end of the arbor the sun's golden disc was discovered, only a span high above the horizon. Bayard would have given the world, at that moment, to have pressed the slender hand which lay within his arm. But he was happiness itself, as he sat by her, with other faces that he loved reflecting looks of sweet content.

Pleasant home scenes, where happy groups are gathered without pride or ostentation, whose tender beauty is unwritten, but whose sweetness is treasured, and whose peaceful harmony we come to prize more than the exciting, passionate strain. Clouds of saffron dappled all the western sky, as the party left the arbor, and strolled about the paths of the broad old garden. Cathara and Bayard sought in vain to match two stripes of the beautiful long ribbon-grass. Its diversity perplexed, enchanted, and baffled them.

"*C'est impossible*," said Cathara, "just as impossible now as when I was a child, for then, these were my playfellows as well as cowslips and daises," shaking her head, and smiling at their futile efforts; "Nature refuses to duplicate herself." As they entered the library, Cathara took a seat near the window, Bayard chose an ottoman at her feet. Mrs. Temple was discoursing upon a grave subject with Mr. Somerton.

"Is there not a consolation," she asked, "in the

thought that our friends are permitted to come from the other world and help us in our hours of trial and suffering? An angel came and strengthened our Saviour in his agony: why may not the spirits of our friends aid us when sorrow or death draws near?"

"I know," replied the old man, "that one Supreme Spirit is ever about us; of that I often have a sublime consciousness. But I have never felt that friends or kindred hovered near, protecting us from evil, or shielding us from sorrow. I am not impressed with the need of any interposing spirits. To me, it is so sweet to lay my burthen upon the Lord. He has asked us to come to Him if we needed rest, or were heavy laden. He loves us more, he compassionates us more tenderly, than it is possible for the dearest friend to do. He is touched by a feeling of our infirmities. He wept at the grave of Lazarus, nor ever turned away from an earnest cry. I believe there never was a sincere prayer that was not answered according to our best needs. Let us look aloft to Him for aid, who giveth all things freely and upbraideth not."

No one spoke after these solemn words, until May entered with Paul. "I have promised to sing a ballad to my escort," said May; "will it disturb the eloquent silence which reigns here?"

"Do sing, Little May," said her mother.

"My songs are so old-fashioned," said May, stringing up an antique Spanish guitar. "I have an untutored voice, not fit to greet the ears of such critics as you," addressing Pierre and Cathara. "Can you bear the infliction?"

"Try us, and see," responded Pierre.

"Will you come to the braes, to the braes of Balquither," was the first she sung. Cathara was delighted with May's low, sweet singing.

"How pretty that is," said Cathara. "I used to shout that as I flew over the hills when I was a child."

"Where the deer and the roe, lightly bounding together,
Spend the lang simmer's day 'mang the bonnie Highland heather."

"Now sing, cousin May, my father's favorite."

"What is that?" Cathara inquired.

"Oh, Mary, when the wild wind blows."

She had never heard it.

"It is a soldier's song," said Pierre; "sing on. sweet cousin."

She sang it with infinite simplicity; with the wild wood-bird note, clear and distinct, she had learned to imitate in her childhood from nature, but yet there was another tune in it, which was music astray with melancholy. But now the evening drew on, and Mr. Somerton, taking Paul by the hand, thanked Mrs. Temple for the pleasant visit. Then Cathara rose, lingered a little about May and her mother, as if swayed by some feeling she wished but did not choose to speak. Bayard followed her as she went out, he stopping to pluck at a great white rose that shone luminous and hung its head over the gate.

"See, Miss Clyde, night's Queen arises at your presence, and sweeps the darkness with her silver wings," pointing to the moon rapidly rising above the distant hill-top.

"And what a phantasm she makes of all these interlacing outlines of leaves and branches over our heads," replied Cathara. "She shimmers them with her light, or is it the breeze—it is impossible to be quite clear in this mirage of lustrous haze?"

She sprang on lightly before him, as if walking were too measured for the ethereal mood which inspired her.

As for Pierre, all duties, all hopes, all past, all future, were rolled into one fresh perfection of the present. The earth was like a pavement of music ; the sky an hemisphere of bliss, and life a new, enchanting reality. His lips were sealed in silence, until her words broke the spell.

“Good-night, Mr. Bayard.”

Had he known that he was parting with her—but he did not.

“Good-night, Miss Clyde ; may you sleep as soft as this flower. Will you take the rose ? It is a pure urn of moonlit dew, I have not ventured to breathe upon it.”

He went homeward to muse upon each act, look, and word, and to dream of the morrow.

Cathara listened to his retreating footsteps, leaning from her window, long after they had died away. Then a silence fell upon her, almost a solitude, and a half consciousness that a part of herself had gone with him ; and she thought,

“Must we forever be in thraldom to love ? I have always been conscious of a secret elation, at the thought of my own insulation from social ties, as if thus I drew nearer to God. But I have found one whose mood so nearly matches mine, that I must escape or confess the sympathy. I must away, then, or shall I stay, and find out our antagonisms ? Dangerous experiment—and yet, and yet, poor foolish me, what sayest thou, fair Rose, with thy hundred-tongued petals, set round in a drift of coiling snow ? That thou and I need not part ? We will not—let us go and ponder a conclusion *sub-rosa*.”

Cathara tied a silken cord to her rose, and wound it about a parian tablet that hung at the head of her bed,

that it might wave uncrushed, a fragrant censer over her dreams. Upon the tablet, in sharp intaglio, floated Santa Catharina borne to heaven in the arms of the four beautiful angels.

Life was sweet to Cathara under the breath of the rose, under the circling flight of the seraphim, going up into fair altitude, of visionary aura; under the light, too, of a mysterious shekinah, that holds the life of all lives, that was dawning and trembling its luminous electric sympathy, and coming on to meet her fancy like a new dawn. She was loth to leave her thoughts for sleep, but nathless, sleep came, and still she saw the flower go rocking in a happy gleam until it unfolded into one broad pavilion. Each one of its leaves was upheld by an aerial sprite, who tossed the dew-drops from its streaming hair, in long garlands, that fell down in blended sheen of stars and moonlight evanescent. Every face was aglow with love and tenderness as they wheeled slowly around her, like the thoughts of a lover infolding his Paradise; then swifter and swifter they circle, until drawn up into a sky of insufferable brightness, where the evening stars were turned to harps, overswept with mysterious music that dashes near her like foam. She stretches out to ingather one of those pearl bubbles, when she awakens and finds her hand clasping at a moonbeam, and raising her head and glancing quick about, she sees the portrait of the moon hanging in the mirror opposite, and reflecting its *camera lucida* picture into her face. The room is swarming with romance thrall, and the green branches in shadow dance like grotesque elves upon her chamber floor.

She rose and looked out of the window once more; the night was softer than day, the air pellucid gold

and steeped in the richest fragrance. "Do spirits walk the earth? So will I." And hiding the flower in her bosom she stole down, pushed back the latch, and floated softly out into the moonlight. Enveloped in a dark-green cloth mantle, she looked like a bough trembling with its mystic shaft of light upon the green sward. She asks herself if she is dreaming still; she hears a bird flutter in his leafy nest; she hears the brook gurgle and dally like a poet with his crystal rhythm. Is it Faith and Destiny that breeds such mystic, super-earthly life into the breathing silence? She is not hurried; she is not fleet; although the moon is going down, it is still the prime of the night, and she clings passionately to the delicious ether which kisses her lips with tropical softness, and bathes her sense with ambrosial aroma. Planets drop down from their vague heights, as moontints pale, and watch her with burning eyes as she goes out to meet unsubstantial beauty—something felt but not seen. What does she, hovering in night's hidden penetralia? She ventures as near the little brown house as she dares; she conceals herself in a hollow of green gloom. She begins to sing a slumberous song, faint and low; downy heads are troubled with this unseasonable music, and swing about in their green cradle-beds. The voice swells out its deep undertones, long and prolonged, until it thrills every leaf into a sounding reflex that sends the tones vibrating higher and higher, wider and more penetrating. More and more intense it drifts, like a whole continent of Arabian spice, into Pierre's open window. He awakens, starts up, stands by the casement, and speaks out in an unconscious trumpet-tone.

"Who is this, who is this, that sings her soul away to the lone night and stars? I am here, I am here, where art thou?"

Another moment, duly equipped, he speeds down into the garden, through the meadow and by the woodland, and back again, he margins the road-path. So impalpable, ethereal, so positively without substance, lies Cathara imbedded in her bushy thicket, he might as well look where the midnight is not, as to seek to find her where she is; yet he was persevering and chased phantoms, levelling and displacing grass and shrubs; like a meteor, glancing in and out under the dew-dropping trees, routing fays out of their cups, disturbing katydids to chatter loud their sentinel words to the warders of the night, calling out a melancholy note from the anxious whip-poor-will, while he dashed about the tangled undergrowth, seizing upon volatile shades at every turn, that melted into dim air at his touch; but he knows that voice—every pulse in his heart shook with a mysterious tremor, as his soul breaks forth into a voluntary of love and honor at this mighty bidding. He yields at last, but wavers not between a dream and a reality. “It is no wizard vision. Never was I half so conscious of life and love; to-morrow will I make clear this delicious, perplexing voice.”

Green pastures and velvet slopes spread out before him in his morning rest, and when he arose he smiled, and promised himself the sight of one, in midmost sun-day, who should make confession, and say she had filled the whole night-world with so bright a spirit of harmony, that despair had been driven out of the heart of presumptuous mortals, and their inmost hungers appeased with a harvest of hope.

This same morning, a note of adieu came from Cathara to May, to say that she had left for Boston.

Mrs. Temple and May grieved over the loss of their friend. Pierre tasted the keenest disappointment. His

pride clamored, "She knows, she must know, that I love her. That it is my very life, and will have its way —a sorry way without her. Does her soul shrink from sacrament with mine—then God forbid. And far be it from me with bitter thoughts to blur her beautiful image; still let me keep that outline as clear to my vision, as death-transfigured Beatrice was to Dante's, otherwise I were indeed bereaved. And yet, hope whispers that she is mine, that she must come to rest upon my love, and I, to her, for inspiration."

His mind was so dissonant to a despairing view of any event in life, that he had faith that the strong, resolute, insatiate passion that bowed his soul in her presence, must find an echo in her heart, and he felt strong to remove mountains of distance and difficulty, if need be.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BY THE SEA.

CATHARA's preparations for visiting the sea-shore had been made with the greatest enthusiasm. She longed to look upon the mysterious infinitude of the ocean, to hear its wild music, and feel its renovating breath; the days were becoming more and more oppressive in the city, and she was glad that on the morrow they were to leave. There, too, she expected to meet Mrs. Vail, Astonley's sister, who could tell her of her mother's early years, for they had been friends in girlhood, and she longed to hear more of that sweet young mother whom death had so early translated to the "Bright Beyond." The future rose before her like those fair clouds, which at evening gather and hang like bands of bright seraphs, luring us to far-off regions of beauty. Life had been to her one unbroken chain of happy influences, under which the discordant elements had not yet appeared, to upheave the stormy breakers, and lash life into a tempest. Oh! bright exultant heart of youth, pity those who, young in years, have never felt the keen pleasure of joyful hopes—that enthusiasm without passion, those phantasies without a name.

It was the afternoon of a warm August day. A mass of soft gray clouds obscured the sun at its setting, but left its light, like a chain of beaten gold, wound in

and out of the fleecy mass of vapor, to appear in the form of a serpent, and this lay repeated in the subterranean world of the Atlantic ocean, as Norman Astonley, his sister, and Cathara, having sailed past Fort Columbus, with its round bastion, the finely indented shores of Long Island—past Fort Hamilton, which stands lower down to guard the bay, drew near the lower Jersey coast. Here, upon a low rocky stratum, whose craggy sides showed many a rent and fissure, Philip Hinton, an old sea-captain, having retired from service, chose to build him a home. “I can no longer follow my ship over the sea; I have built me a home so that I may be near the mistress who has ruled my destiny for more than forty years,” he had written in a letter to Mr. Sterling. This mansion was built of grayish stone, which lay in irregular masses upon the shore. The place would have worn a barren aspect had not a slope been formed, in the rear of the house, and rich mould carefully collected, and the terrace sodded with the greenest turf. Every rare plant that perfects in this latitude had been transplanted to a little, secluded, sheltered parterre; here, some hardy creepers had taken root, and sent their clinging spirals up to the lattice upon the south side of the house, whence, after climbing and clinging to the rough stones and scaling the tower and mantling all but a projecting window, whose outlook must not be invaded, they descended in lines of wavy verdure to the rocks, whose jagged peaks they encircled; or, clambering into every warm recess, laughed at the foam, as it broke over them in a spray of pearls; or, when the tide ran high, submerged but did not destroy them. Captain Hinton lived some ten years to enjoy his home in this “kingdom by the sea,” and many remembered his odd sailing craft, wherewith

he cruised about the coast, or sometimes put out to sea, where he remained for weeks together. But he and his family had passed away, and Mr. Sterling had become the inheritor, but had never felt the least curiosity tempt him to visit this isolated, sea-girt mansion, and, knowing Astonley's passion for yachting he had bequeathed it to him for the advantages it offered for such sport. Meanwhile this digression, our party pause on board the sharp-sailing yacht to enjoy the scene, which, bathed in the gold-mist, appears of almost limitless splendor; the green sea tumbling in upon the rocks; the distant shores, the sky lines—all are exquisitely blended. Cathara's face was lit up with such an expression of perfect enjoyment, that her cousin could not forbear to press her hand as it rested upon his arm, while they ascended the stone steps hewn out of the rock.

“Let me but add something to your happiness. What is my life except to be devoted to you?” he whispered in her ear.

“Forbidden ground,” she replied quickly; but he did not seem to hear, as he led her on smilingly.

“I am host, and have appointed you your rooms in the tower, as having the finest view.”

As they entered, they were met by a servant of Italian aspect.

“Carl, show this lady to her rooms.” The man who obeyed wore his hair straight on his forehead, and had the air of a cloister about him. He advanced with a measured pace, straightforward and slow, his eyes bent downward, as he ascended the broad staircase; at one of the landings he stopped and said, “The steps are many, will the Signorina rest?”

“No,” she replied, a little impatiently, for his prosy

pace did not suit her mood, and seeing her maid standing at the door of a suite of apartments, she flew past him, nor did she hear him say,

“She is just like the picture of ‘Our Lady,’ that I prayed to in the chapel.”

Cathara was pleased with her large, well appointed sleeping room; out of it opened a small but pretty apartment, lit by an odd projecting window, which had evidently been built to command an unbroken view. Opposite to the window were a number of swinging shelves. Upon the uppermost lies the glass, with which the captain made many a clever observation; below, are ranged Captain Parry’s Voyage Round the World; The History of the Compass and Magnet; The Philosophy of Astronomy; Treatises upon Latitude and Longitude; and, finally, an old sea-stained Bible.

Cathara did not examine farther, but giving a glance at the globes and charts, the telescope, and barometer, she hastened to lay aside her travelling dress for something lighter, and descended to the dining-room, where her cousin led her in, and seated her at his right hand, Mrs. Vail taking the seat opposite her brother. As host, her cousin was considerate and attentive. “It is sweet to be cared for,” thought Cathara, as she closed her eyes that night among her kindred.

Very late Cathara slept; a sleep unbroken, deliciously dreamless. Yet, withal, there was a super-consciousness of enjoyment about it, that showed some faculty kept sentinel, and not only redeemed it from a blank, but left a sense of exquisite enjoyment.

She found no one in the breakfast-room but Astonley, when she came down, Mrs. Vail having not yet completed her somewhat elaborate morning toilet.

She looked so enchantingly happy, as she entered, Astonley rose to greet her, and said :

“ Like Wordsworth’s maiden, a music born of murmuring sound has crept into your face.” It was impossible for him to understand that his cousin could be so happy, solely because she was with those upon whom she had a natural claim, and because she was surrounded by so much beauty that was new and inspiring to her ; he could but flatter himself that she loved him, and that in some propitious hour she would confess it.

“ I will not ring for a servant, let me pour you out a cup of chocolate ; this burning spirit-lamp has preserved it quite hot,” and handing it to her, he would have fed her, but that she would not permit.

“ You are very kind, and I so recreant to your morning hours ; I did not know there was such a lullaby in these flowing waters.”

As she rose from the table, Astonley said, “ Come and see the captain’s drawing-room.”

India matting lay upon the floor ; India chairs and curious bamboo settees were disposed about the spacious apartment. Upon these lay, at intervals, cushions of rose and blue satin, richly embroidered ; and here and there were distributed squares and rugs of Persian origin, quaint in pattern, brilliant in color. Indian screens and Indian cabinets, Chinese vases, and fans composed of the plumage of gay birds ; little tables inlaid with satin-wood and ivory, ornamented the window spaces, and held a great variety of baskets filled with pink, and brown, and amber shells. In one corner stood an immense marble vase, lined with sea mosses of every autumnal hue, and piled high with superb specimens of crimson and white coral, and shin-

ing mother-of-pearl shells, iridescent with tints of violet and silvery pink.

“What a charming apartment!” said Cathara, “and those long Venetian shades of pale sea-green, and the marine views, are in perfect harmony.”

“The spoils of many a voyage, a sort of journal for the ancient mariner, I suppose,” said Astonley, “which he used to turn over as a priest numbers the beads of his rosary.”

“Do you perceive the delicate spicy atmosphere which pervades the room; stirring the imagination with thoughts of other climes, and voyages into the Orient?” exclaimed Cathara.

“And the look of extreme coolness; no oceanic grotto ever surpassed it for ornamentation of shells and coral; I am glad the sun beats with such a fury without, or we should be crystallized, Cathara. I shall freeze in this cave,” and he shivered, ironically; “are mermaids as cold as you, cousin?”

“I entreat you,” he said, as he drew near her, and took her hand, “fling some of your happiness over me; something that shall warm and soften, or I shall turn into ice. Give me leave to keep this warm, soft little creature; it shall be like a bird to nestle to my heart,” laying her hand gently upon his breast.

“Altogether the effect is very novel and charming,” said the young girl turning away, as though she did not hear him; and seeing the central window partly ajar, she drew back the shutters. They opened upon a balcony, sustained by a frame-work of iron which was fastened firmly into the rocks; an awning of striped cloth shaded the balcony from the sun. As Cathara leaned over the parapet, she called:

“Come, cousin, this view is radiant with life; it warms my heart to its inmost core!”

"I am glad of that, Lady Cousin," said Astonley, as he drew near.

"And the tide is setting in with such power, I hope we shall get a dash of old Neptune's brine. Ah! there it comes," she cried eagerly, and clapped her hands, as the tossing waves mounted the rocks and cast upon her a mimic shower.

She shaded her eyes to look afar at the silver blue brightness of the rippling ocean. Serenely the white sails appeared to float the passing ships, gaily sported the tiny row-boats, dimpling the enticing waters; sweet in her ear sounded the music of the cool dripping bil-lows as they smote on the rocks. Written on her fair face was the adoration of a loving heart; the worship of a discerning spirit, the serenity of a child at rest in the arms of its father.

As Astonley gazed upon this gentle preacher of goodness, he was indignant at her delight in simple pleasures, wroth with her, that he could not make her his own by a natural fellowship of lower loves and baser enjoyments; and while he cursed the gulf that lay between them, he did not despair of bridging it over.

CHAPTER XIX.

S A I L I N G .

“I SHALL ever revert,” said Mrs. Vail, one morning, as they were quietly sewing together, “to the friendship I had with your mother, as to something inexpressibly delicate and holy, the best part of my life. I was just thirteen, when my mother took me to the Isle of Wight. We went for the benefit of my father’s health. We arrived, one June day, at the little white cottage we had secured for the season; I, in a perfect ecstasy at a sight of the flowers and vines, which nearly buried the house. We had to part the yellow jessamine clusters, in order to get entrance. The perfume of that flower haunts me like a monitor, more powerful than a sermon. One day, when we were walking on the beach, we met a pale, tall lady, accompanied by her niece, a girl some two or three years my senior, and, as I soon learned, my cousin. I was pleased to find they lived in the cottage adjoining ours, for I often longed for a companion near my own age.

At first, Alice—she who became your mother, Cathara—was very reserved; but at length, she would come to the white palings which divided our flower grounds, and extend her taper fingers, in token of friendship; then, we would sit down, and weave grass stems into broad plaits, and those into baskets, which we would fill with the flowers exclusive to our gardens,

and daily we exchanged. Almost every afternoon we spent upon the beach, running or walking in advance, but in sight of our elders. When weary, we would rest upon the white sand, and gather shells and pretty pebbles to deck the mimic museum we had at home. Alice was a fair tall girl, with hair dark as your own, but not your eyes; hers were blue as the violet. I was restless and volatile; but she calmed me by her superior thoughtful ways, and by the affection which she lavished upon me. She had the prettiest, most endearing ways, she seemed to love every thing; but was always pensive, never very merry. I think she was afraid that her aunt would not live long. She would sit for hours reading good books to her, and trying to keep me near her, by holding my hand, that I, too, might listen. Could I always have had one so gentle and unselfish to influence me, my standard of life might have been higher; but, that summer over, we met but rarely. She was early confirmed in the church, and married very young. Soon after her aunt's death, she came to this country, where she and her husband fell victims to an epidemic fever, after a marriage of only two years. It was a long time before we could find out any thing definite about you; but we knew that your uncle took care of you and your cousin Arthur."

Cathara pressed Mrs. Vail's hand.

"I think I can see her as she was," said Cathara, "and sometimes I fancy I see her as she is. And I love the earth more that her feet have pressed it, and oftener I look up to the heavens because she is there."

"How very fanciful and romantic you are," said Mrs. Vail, smilingly.

"If that be a stigma, I can bear it," rejoined

Cathara, "for I must be true to all that is within me, and I believe, underneath the most prosaic nature there dwells a glimmer of ideal perfection, else how could they live?"

"Very well, on stocks, and bonds, and available capital."

"I beg your pardon; the incentive to obtain that wealth is ideal, and aims at securing some home of beauty, some earthly paradise, hedged in from sharp winds, where life may flow on in a smooth song; or, if not in that way, is there not a lure in being Fortune's favorite, successful, sagacious, talented. And those who have inherited wealth, live under the illusion of ideas; aristocracy, rank, grace, symmetry—they argue for themselves."

"I wish I could see it so; I have always lived among worldly and external people."

"But, I am sure, dear Mrs. Vail, you believe that the life is more than the meat."

"That is the martyr's spirit, I know," said Mrs. Vail; "alas! I am no martyr."

Cathara smiled, while her eye rested upon her companion's rosy English face, the glance bright but evasive, the hair divided into two smooth brown braids, and fastened round the side of the face like a school-girl's, the large pleasure-loving mouth, the gay, lithe movements of her light, slender figure."

"I cannot fancy you a companion of my mother," exclaimed Cathara, "you look so very young."

"If there be romance in that remark, I confess I like it," said Mrs. Vail. "It is dreadful to me to think of growing old, and dying, a specimen of a broken-down, wrinkled old woman, avoided by the society that once courted me,"

"But I have seen old age so full of beauty as to be quite alluring."

"That is the way young people talk, to whom old age is a myth," said Mrs. Vail, who had been progressing towards the door-way, and she paused to add, "I would rather die than live to be old." As she closed the door after her, something like a sigh escaped Cathara, but she ran to the open window and solaced herself by a long look at the unconquered ocean.

The days that followed were extremely sultry; but this rendered the nights only more soft and delicious. And sometimes in the yacht, that obeyed every breath of the breeze, and oftentimes rowing in canoes of Indian fashion, Cathara listened to the tranquil echo of the dipping oars, as they flashed luminous in the moon's ray.

The scene was enchanting. For miles, the sea flowed on in silver-crested ripples, unbroken, save by some troop of white-winged craft passing by, like stately swans or lazy clouds; while hundreds of oarsmen from the fort and from the city, plied the glittering main with steady stroke. Often the silence was interrupted by the officers and their wives and daughters, singing the Canadian Boatmen's Song, or other favorite roundelay, the long-drawn cadences swelling out mellow and harmonious in the distance.

Cathara did not escape observation. When the moonbeams lit up the pure symmetry of her countenance, set off by the dense darkness of her hair, the lustrous eyes, the smile, so dangerously sweet, awakened an intensity of admiration in the hearts of a number of officers; and while glancing at the handsome lineaments of her companion, and acknowledging that she was fitly attended, they yet chose to express their apprecia-

tion, by a nightly shower of bouquets and garlands and flowery crowns, and singing in joint concert:

“Lady of beauty,
Roses will fade, while time flows on.”

These attentions gratified Astonley’s pride, so long as they approached no nearer.

The beauty which surrounded Cathara, intoxicated her; every breath was a luxury, every step a pleasure. The light of morning met her eyes as though distilled from the golden chalices of flowers; the adulation which surrounded her, combined to steep her senses in a languor, visionary and delightful.

Astonley exerted every faculty to prolong this soul-subduing sphere to glorify the thrall of the senses. His smile grew sweeter, his manner more deferential. He studied to express his love for her, by numberless acts and tokens, thus appealing to her imagination more powerfully than by any words. After having, by much planning, attained to the almost entire possession of her society, he now concentrated every effort to win her affections. He desired a complete triumph, an entire subjugation, an unreserved consent to their marriage. For dazzling as was her fortune to one of his extravagant and luxurious habits, yet he would enhance the flavor of his conquest by the full measure of her love, overflowing, unstinted. He sought to lure her fancy with descriptions of the treasures of art, those immortal trophies of Italian genius, the land of the ideal, where she might revel, amid creations of loveliness and light, unfolding her talent, impelled and inspired by the works those master-hands had wrought; where every day should add to the delightful recollection of halcyon hours, in climes, whose breath wafts the

fragrance of the orange flowers, and lulls the senses with its soft repose ; of columns, towers, temples, relics of buried nations,—whose epitaph, though fragmentary, is eloquent, and commands attention. “Tell me, Cathara, will you not let me be your guide ?” he asked her one evening, as they sat at the vessel’s prow. “Oh ! be thou my companion in the voyage of life, as thou now art, my hope, my life, my inspiration !” And he bent his head low to catch her reply. Cathara was leaning pensively over the side of the vessel, and did not seem to hear him ; she did not choose to answer. With a sigh of disappointment, he raised his head, while an unpleasant smile passed over his visage, distorting its beauty with a look of malice and revenge. He folded his arms, with a frown of inflexible pride and hardness. Cathara did not heed or interrupt his mood ; she was listening to the wind, which was blowing fresher every moment, and curling the waves into long surges. She glanced upward ; gray clouds hurried rapidly past the moon, and were gathering into a mass of black-fringed vapor ; only a few stars peeped out from the rifted darkness. The ocean, as if ashamed of those recent hours of dimpling dalliance, when it courted the sun to lay, golden and tranquil, on its jasper breast, now revolted from those illusive shackles, and ran riot with a sense of power and aroused majesty.

Like cascades, the foaming breakers came pouring in from the far-distant main, the boiling flood accumulating and a peal bursting from the heavens, as if threatening with destruction their airy craft.

Cathara sprang involuntarily closer to Astonley.

“How sublime the storm is coming on, but can we not reach home before its full wrath is upon us ?”

“We have turned our vessel some time since, and she is now skimming, light as a sea-gull, homeward.”

"I did not think I was such a coward. The summer sea we have sailed over is nothing like this."

"Do not fear. I will be your guide, protector, saviour, if need be," he exclaimed, in passionate accents, as he encircled her with his arm, and drew her gently to his side. "Let me shelter you, let me have the right to be near, and guard you from every danger."

And as the waves continued to mount higher, they forced the vessel into the deep troughs of the sea, terrifying Cathara, but rejoicing Astonley, who, experienced, felt that it was a brief and passing "blow," whose perils he would gladly have prolonged for the delight of holding Cathara to his heart. There was something manly and inspiring in her cousin's coolness and self-possession.

The air suddenly cooled, the waves lulled under the drooping wind, the bright moon glided with an ether-realized beauty across the cleansed heavens, whispering, with celestial voice, "Peace, be still," to the troubled ocean.

Cathara felt the invigorating atmosphere give life to her cheek. Through her veins, which throbbed but a moment before with a delicious languor, ran an icy shiver, banishing, like magic, the flower-soft enervations which had bound her. She sprang erect, self-poised and calm.

She raised a fervent eye to heaven, and an inward prayer of gratitude, that she felt herself once more free and exorcised from the blandishments which had well-nigh proved fatal to her judgment. She was impatient, as Astonley carried her tenderly up the slippery steps, and so on to the entrance, for the path was unsafe, from the hailstones which had fallen. She would have run quickly to her own room, but Astonley would de-

tain her hand for a lingering pressure, and to show her his face, which was at once glowing and splendid, as if, in that hour of abandonment, he had found a full acceptance with her.

When her maid had divested her of her damp dress, Cathara dismissed her, and wrapping a warm cashmere dressing-gown about her, she sat down by the window, as if to gather thought for introspection. She noted the yet restless sea, as it ebbed back to its own domain, querulous, moaning, fretted. Sailing out of the channel, past the heights of Neversink, glided a procession of ships, proud and stately, outlined in saintly whiteness, as the last ray of the dying moon disclosed their robes of snow.

Solemn and vast, unkindred to earth, for the first time, Cathara felt a recoil from that gulf, black and broad as night. Unflushed by the midnight stars, it lay the embodiment of some great infraction of the moral law, alien from heaven, restless as a lost spirit.

Sunlight might shimmer on its surface, but failed to pierce its awful depths, untraversed, save by grim monsters of prey. For the precious life it clamored, and rejoiced in the death-cry of human souls. Priceless argosies of dear-bought treasure had gone down into its remorseless vortex.

Cathara shuddered as these thoughts seized her : "It has been a heathenish hour ; why did I seek to go down into this under-world ? Is it a reflex of my own disturbed mind ? I will look aloft, into those high mansions of translucent blue, where, silver-sandalled, the stars go circling in their orbits of gold."

"Why art thou cast down, oh my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me ? Hope thou in God," came like a reminiscent chime of joy. "I cannot, I

dare not, I will not be his wife. The bare thought chills me with an unaccountable gloom," she murmured, as she turned from the window, drew close over it the heavy damask curtain, and with a resolution that nothing should longer detain her where she had better never have come, and from whence she ought to have gone a week ago. She composed herself to sleep, but in dreams she seemed to hear in clarion tones repeated, "*Sans peur et sans reproche.*" The next morning, as Cathara reached the foot of the staircase which led her into the broad hall, she saw her cousin Edith advancing towards her with a radiant mien. "We are going to have a *fête*, Cathara! Norman has promised. We are to have the splendid band from the war steamer, and plenty of lords and ladies from the city and from the forts. Our English friends have promised to bring Conrad, the millionaire. I shall set my cap for him. Now, lady mine, I want your copartnership in this affair, which is to come off in three days."

It was with a feeling of irritation that Cathara felt her determination to leave on the following day give way.

But policy is often only another name for the moderation of the wise, whereupon, she admonished her own desires; and when Edith added, "I am just making out an order for lace, ribbon, and wax-lights," Cathara smiled. "A singular mixture," she said, but took the card, and added several costly articles, for herself and Mrs. Vail.

"Oh! you charming cousin fair. I was sure you would enter with enthusiasm into this nice scheme. We shall dance in this broad hall. Is it not a fine place?" and she twirled round as if testing its quality.

“We will breakfast alone,” said Mrs. Vail, dismissing the servant. “What more can we wish for, than hot coffee, fresh eggs—with these dainty gold spoons to tap them with, and French rolls—and there!” she added, as she raised some vine leaves from a silver basket, and showed golden nectarines and downy peaches. “Oh! the fragrant, blushing beauties,” said Cathara, bending over them with a look of unalloyed pleasure. “These almost make me homesick for my garden,” she added. “Have you never felt, that, in time, you would grow vastly weary of the salt, salt-sea odor, and the sandy wastes where flowers and fruits refuse to grow?”

“Indeed, the same thoughts have arisen, when I think of England’s verdant lawns; but this is just the air to perfect the complexion, that solaces me. Even in sentiment I hate to be ‘Il penseroso,’ ” observed the self-reliant Mrs. Vail, with a confidential air; “I feel as though it were a reflection upon my capacities and powers. I disdain to be the sport of circumstances, I prefer to keep the helm in my own hand. But now that Carl is rid of,—and, by the way, servants find their special excitement in scrutinizing our affairs—did you ever think of it?”

“Certainly,” rejoined Cathara, “as we long to penetrate the mysteries of courts and privy councillors; something beyond, out of sight—a phantasmagoria, in which lies some hidden witchcraft.”

“All the morning, Norman has been trimming the sails of that bewitching craft the ‘Sprite,’ ” remarked Mrs. Vail, laughingly. “He is testing her sailing qualities by numerous little excursions. The sport excites him—for you must know there is to be a run among

the best yachts in the harbor, for a silver pitcher, the day after to-morrow, so that we shall be left to ourselves, to plot as we choose."

Cathara's spirits rose at this affirmation, for she was weary of Astonley's *surveillance* and extravagant hopes, and after the fête she could easily make her adieu.

All the remainder of that day, and the following, Mrs. Vail and Cathara got on very smoothly, left to themselves. The former being full of the excitement of preparing an effective toilet for the coming festivity, Cathara aided her to run hems into long strips of rose-colored gauze.

"You know, do you not, Cathara," inquired Mrs. Vail, as her skilful fingers laid the superb black lace upon the skirt of her dress—"you know that this Mr. Conrad is a very eccentric merchant?"

"No, I have not heard one word of this celebrity."

"You have so little curiosity," sighed Mrs. Vail, "that it is really hardly worth while to inform you."

"You are longing to tell me, and I want, at all events, to have the history of the man who has inspired you with setting your cap."

"I pardon the slight irony that was hid in your pleasant voice, as you pronounced those last words."

"His history no one knows," she began in an almost inaudible and affected whisper of mystery. "He is the most reserved and melancholy man you can well imagine. He hates his own sex, but is courteous as a knight of chivalry to women; in conversation, bitter, sarcastic, and conservative; in conduct, romantic enough. It is only last week that he jumped off the dock to rescue a drunken German."

“ You interest me now, if that last be true. I hate myself for the spoken doubt,” said Cathara, a flush passing over her face, “ but, of course, this hero of yours elicits unbounded admiration from tender-hearted ladies, who would fain pour consolation into his wounded heart, and lead him gently back to the soft influences of domestic life.”

“ I have always wished,” sighed Mrs. Vail, confidently, “ that heaven had made me such a man, one so unlike my dear lost husband, one quite above the vulgar herd, one to admire. Admiration I consider the best basis for love,” she added, practically.

“ And not the million. Did I not hear you say he was a millionaire ? ”

“ Oui, ma chère.”

“ Would all the perfections you are so desirous of finding in your future spouse congregate in the village schoolmaster revolving upon his wooden stool ? Must he not be seated above his fellows, upon a golden tripod ; what say, cousin ? ” questioned Cathara.

“ Dear Cathara, in the first place, your poor man would probably be dressed in an outre manner, with an uncombed shock of bristling hair, a long ill-cut swallow-tailed coat, big shoes tied over gray stockings. It is difficult to imagine an ill-attired man, with beautiful manners ; they must indeed be transcendent to awaken a romantic vision.”

“ After all, then, your beau-ideal lies in the hands of the tailor and barber, whose melancholy air is the result of the unpaid bills of the said tailor and barber.”

“ How matter-of-fact you are, Cathara ! ”

“ But this Conrad is rich, and hence Medora desires to please him ? ”

“Not unless he has all the great qualities of which we have been speaking,” said Mrs. Vail, heroically.

“Particularly his great wealth,” smiled Cathara.

“You are incorrigible,” said Mrs. Vail, “and do not, I fear, understand the finer feelings of a highly-wrought romantic sensibility,” and then she broke into a merry laugh, in which Cathara joined.

Gathering the folds of the dress she was working at in her hand, Mrs. Vail drew them about her pliant waist, and exclaimed,—

“Is not this trimming bewitching! I am sure the eyes of that Conrad will be taken by this,” and she revolved about the room, humming the mazourka measure.

“This love of yours for dress is truly barbarous. Is that the war-dance, cousin?” said Cathara demurely, “Il Pocohonti wait till the victory is won, before they put on their array for rejoicing.”

“Little tease,” cried Mrs. Vail springing towards her, and shaking her by the shoulders, “will you never have done with your comments—say, say, you pretty, beguiling creature?”

Cathara folded her hands, and assuming a penitential air, answered—

“But I warn you, I shall enact the part of a deliverer, and when I see your enchantments prevailing—your velvet soft arms enwreathed about the neck of the poor victim, I, in the guise of a mermaid, will rise, appear to him, and say—

“Danger is near. Leave this cruel earth, where every feminine seeks to prey upon and devour you, and come with me under the clear green waves where Aphrodite dwells; there, beneath the coral branches of the trees, thou shalt rest from persecution,

while from morn to night, I will deck your moustache
with the purest of pearls ; a star-fish shall shine upon
your breast."

"A star was shining on his breast,
And then he said he loved,"

sung out Mrs. Vail, as she gave the last finishing stroke
to her costume, "and if that Conrad is so obtuse, as to
overlook *petite* me, may he perish in his cold abstrac-
tions. I will now vanish under this rose-colored
cloud," and lifting up the mass of gauze, she closed the
door.

"What a little humming-bird of a woman ; I can-
not associate her with my thoughtful, pensive mother.
[wonder Norman did not tell me, how gay she was,"
soliloquized Cathara.

CHAPTER XX.

THE FETE.

IT was the delicious month of September. The ocean, still unswept by the storm wing of the Equinox, mirrored the peace of the sky.

The air had lost its summer balm and softness. It no longer hung upon the senses dreamily, but stimulated to an elasticity, tonic and exhilarating, and to which the muscular chords of the system responded with a conscious and agreeable power. No temperament, however phlegmatic, could escape its influence; and there lay a fiery glow upon Astonley's cheek, and in his eyes, that clearly indicated his entire good humor with himself. He had won the race—the silver guerdon had been awarded to his nautical skill. He felt sure of Cathara. The full fruition and consummation of his most ambitious hopes drew near.

Mrs. Vail was conscious, in her beautiful toilette, of having averted the impress of some dozen years, under the rose mist and lace-like vapor of her ethereal dress. Fond of pleasure, gay music, and dancing, proud of the sister Astonley had chosen, and was so soon to bestow upon her; in love with herself and the world, they both now stand impatient for Cathara's entrance. Meanwhile, the young girl, during all the various stages of her toilette, had solaced herself with the thought of returning to her home before the week was

over,—of postponing until then all further explanations with Astonley, for she saw how high his hopes ran, how confident he was of her consent to their marriage, how his ambition had overleaped his perceptions of justice or delicacy. She saw that he was determined to push his suit to the extremest bound. She dreaded his sore mortification and disappointment, but at length arming herself against the fears which menaced her, condemning herself for her fatuity, she stood, pausing at the door, her heart filled with a portentous throbbing, and beating like some restless, imprisoned creature. Her face flushed a crimson as she entered, and met the ardent gaze of Astonley's expectant look. His own deepened with satisfaction, not unmixed with a hauteur where scorn and revenge, unknown to himself, showed for an instant their ungenial lineaments, pointing, like an index finger, to that day of wrath, when he would not abate one tithe of his due compensation and full suffering for the long restraints he had put upon himself. Cathara saw that he had been misled by her tell-tale blood—saw outflash the ruthless purpose. Anger at herself and him froze the current in her veins, and pale as a statue she turned away and advanced, composedly, and with an enforced smile, towards Mrs. Vail. That lady was so lost in admiring the graceful undulations of Cathara's tunics and trains of pale, transparent, sea-green crape, the fringe of pearls which was appended to each, and which hung like froth upon the wave; the dark, shadowy, clustering hair, low falling upon the faultless neck, that she saw nothing of the emotion which now dilated the polished nostrils and severed the beautiful curve of her lips in twain.

*"Why, Cathara, you are indeed *a la mermaid*," sounded out Mrs. Vail's clear tones. "No Undine

was ever more beautiful," she cried, embracing her with a quick, bright enthusiasm ; " and the rustling of the green mist sheds a cloud of perfume of amber. Bracelets and fan of coral, too ! "

" See ! Norman, she has just risen from the waves of the ocean."

" Yes," replied the latter now advancing near, and showering upon her looks of passionate admiration. " And we must take care that she does not vanish back to her native element, as the half-human fairy used to do."

Cathara wondered if a latent meaning pervaded his words, when he added, taking her hand—

" My own Cathara, you are classical as an antique gem. I bless you that I have found favor in your eyes. Oh ! that you would hasten the day when I shall lead you forth arrayed as my bride."

Without awaiting a response to those words, which fell upon her like a blow, he turned away to receive the throng of guests who were entering. A hectic of indignation settled its brightest scarlet upon Cathara's cheek, and crimsoned anew her lip. She smothered the refutation of his claim, which had almost leapt from her lips at that inopportune moment ; and, with infinite disrelish of the scene around her, she surmounted all appearance of it. Every one knows that when we are acting a part, we are stimulated by a hidden excitement that incites and sustains us. Many remarked, " What a brilliant star !" Her gayety was contagious, her sallies unintermitting. Never had she appeared more delighted to be the " idol of society." All remember the poor actor, who never won so much applause for his merry pranks, as on the night when he had seen his child die.

It seemed as if the crowd could never satisfy their curiosity and admiration, which had been whetted by all sorts of wonderful accounts of her peerless beauty and wit; and when she danced with Capt. Ishton, as she floated through the mazes of the quadrille, with a consummate perfection of movement, that made it a positive, intense pleasure to watch her, the hum of applause overflowed into audible voice, and the most complimentary sentences. And what pleased them best was her unconscious look, as the cloud of incense rolled and gathered about her. She was glad when an interlude of the music gave her some sort of repose, and when Mr. Conrad was presented and invited her to walk with him through the long corridor. With a pretty air of wilfulness she shook off some dozen hang-ers-on who would have detained her, saying—

“ Gentlemen, pray permit me to avail myself of Mr. Conrad’s invitation.”

The large hall where they now went pacing along, was a lofty apartment, whose walls were frescoed with garlands of oak leaves, among which silver sconces held high the clustering wax lights. These danced and flickered as the breeze stole in at the partly opened oriel window, which looked seaward. Through this broad casement a portion of the sky appeared, rolled down like a cerulean curtain, marvellously patterned with stars, whose lustre glimmered upon the trembling sea, as it heaved in its grand monotone of sounding surge and breaking billow.

From pinnace and pennon the beacon signals marked where the vessels lay anchored near the strand, which awaited the return of the gay revellers, who, couched on pillows of down, would court the lullaby of the rocking waters that should bear them to their homes.

A revolving light in the far distance loomed fitfully up from some hidden reef, warning the mariner of the dangers of that vast and solemn sea. For some moments each stood silently contemplating the scene. At length Mr. Conrad gently released his companion's arm, and fronting her, surveyed the peerless girl for a moment with a look in which she felt there lay no ordinary tribute to a woman's beauty.

"Cathara!" he exclaimed. It sounded from his lips as though he were familiar with and loved the name. The young girl raised her eyes in mute astonishment.

"Cathara," his deep voice went on to reiterate, "I never thought that word would escape my lips in this world. It was the name of my cherished sister. When I parted with Arthur Clyde—

"My father's name," interposed Cathara, with a start.

"And a father of whom you may be proud. He was my friend; and just before he sailed from England for this country, he said to me, with his pleasant smile, his young bride standing near, 'If ever I have a daughter, Conrad, I will call her Cathara, in memory of that dear lost sister of yours.' We never met again. I was, subsequently, many years in India. There I did not learn that he had left a child, although I read the intelligence of his death, together with that of his young wife. When I saw you to-night, there was something in your carriage, and still more in the expression of your dark eyes, that called Arthur Clyde from the pale and shadowy land, and bade him rise and walk the earth once more. I remembered his promise. I sought this seclusion, that I might, unnoticed, confirm my convictions, and that I might speak to you of

one" (and he lowered his voice) "who, during all this evening, has fixed his watchful eyes upon you, and who, even now, hovers near. A dastard! Cathara," after a moment's pause, with increased heat. "A bird of prey. I loathe the man. Years have sat lightly upon him, and yet, at the first glance, I knew him; and also knew him by the recoiling antipathy that curdled my blood when I held the hand of the traitor, Norman Astonley, in my own, this night."

A certain dismay fell upon Cathara, as she noted the lowering visage of the dark, iron-looking man before her. Conrad observed her emotion.

"In heaven's name, say that you do not love this man—this treacherous, seductive serpent—or, I can go no further?"

"Go on, go on, be at ease on that point," replied Cathara, quickly.

"The handsome wretch lowers upon us now," said Conrad, who, while he screened Cathara, could watch the crowd, and hurl black looks at any one who sought to approach them. And now, his face absolutely glared upon Astonley, with so repulsive an expression, that the latter, not having the least idea who he was, and not wishing to arouse a scene, turned into the drawing-room to question out this man of vengeful mien.

"You have heard me speak of my sister," he resumed; "when she died, she left an orphaned daughter to my care. She was the last link to what appeared a better and brighter world, than this cold, heartless one in which I now drag out an existence, unblest by affection. A sweet, innocent, credulous girl! Her beauty caught the eye of Norman Astonley. With consummate art he won her affections, under the guise

of what he sneeringly termed, 'only a flirtation.' The conquest made, it became flat and insipid to his taste. Poor child! she had no such word in her vocabulary, as flirtation. She loved him, and when he deserted her, and devoted himself with equal ardor to others, it just broke her heart. I wish heaven had made her of sterner stuff. In spite of all my care, she died, like a flower snapped from its stem.

"I swore before her to be revenged upon this man, who had shipwrecked my dearest hopes; but, Cathara, the poor fool's sweetness melted me down. Her piety, her prayers, her tender looks, her fears lest she should not be able to pray me into heaven, if I imbrued my hands in the man's blood, subverted my manhood; and with her weak arms about my neck, and her wan cheek pressed close to mine, I took an oath, that I would not harm the foul, malignant creature, although he swept the last signs of grace from my withered heart. She died in peace. And, now, I have warned you; can you forgive me for marring this evening, and making it dreary to you with my gloomy stories?"

Smiling up into his face with a sort of piteous sweetness, she said: "I feel quite miserable when I see such as you and Astonley, loving darkness and shunning light."

"You class us together, Cathara, and perhaps you are right. There is an evil spirit within me at sight of him."

Whereupon he unknit his frowning brows, and although his aspect continued cold, it was the cold of a clear winter's night, agreeable, while frosty.

Cathara extended her hand with a conciliatory gesture.

"I am not fit, and I will not clasp it. I can admire

its rare workmanship, too!" looking down upon it as it lay like a snowy lily, in his open hand of brawn.

"There, take it back. It is the hand of a true-hearted woman, one whom I can remember without a sneer."

"Mrs. Vail comes to seek us, we must return," said Cathara.

"Farewell, then," replied Mr. Conrad; "like Monte Christo, 'I will not stay to sup in the house of an enemy.' I sail to-morrow for Europe—I shall return in a year," and before Mrs. Vail could utter the words to detain him, he had turned away.

"I have frightened away your devotee. What a monopoliser he is, to be sure. Well, I am glad he is gone, for the drawing-room would have been in a state of insurrection in half an hour longer—and cries of 'Miss Clyde,' are fermenting the populace. I have no time to ask you now, what that old hobgoblin has been saying, but my curiosity is whetted to the extremest point. But there comes your fate," she said, playfully, as she saw her brother approach, and therefore she made her escape with Captain Ishton for another dance.

"My fate—I hope not," said Cathara, inwardly shrinking, as Astonley took her arm and drew it into his own.

"Who is that vampire, that has held you from us in durance vile?" he asked.

"Oh! one who had a fancy to make me a confidant of some passages in his life."

"They must have been entertaining ones, if they corresponded to his savage looks. I am sure he is a convict escaped from justice—some felon steeped in crime," he exclaimed, with irascibility; "not very good taste,"

he added, with increasing discomfiture, "to devote yourself to such an interloper for half an evening."

"A very agreeable vagrant," she said quietly, her face settling into a fixed gravity.

"You are so pale, I am almost ashamed of you," he went on, trying to provoke, while he eyed her with a stern disapproval.

"And I am learning more of your true character to-night than ever previously," she said, pointedly.

At once, he saw the blunder he was making.

"Forgive me, and acknowledge that I have some cause for complaint. I am jealous in my deep love for you. I did not like that the star of the evening should hide her light," and his face renewed its usual expression. "I am absolved, am I not?"

"Yes," she replied, with languid indifference.

Her manner piqued and nettled him, yet he hid his ire, for the orchestral summons broke into the usual march for supper, and the gay crowd gathered about the choice viands, while laughter and the voice of repartee, filled the air with that busy hum, that social jargon, which sounds curious and undistinguishable enough to the mere looker on.

"If you will condescend to sit, Miss Clyde," said a fine looking French officer to Cathara, "I will bring you sherbet, or an ice, or whatsoever you will."

"Thank you, no;" said Cathara. "You can, however, benefit me by standing as a rampart, to keep off the crowd, while I rest a moment."

Taking the chair he offered her, in truth, she was half a mind to ask protection of some guest, who could give her room in his barge and take her to New York.

"Pray tell me, have you any ladies in your party, and do you return to town to night?"

"I am quite a stranger, and have no ladies with me. I am an officer from the admiral's frigate, which lies anchored down the bay. It was to my ship I expected to return to night," but reading her look of disappointment, he exclaimed, with a sincere politeness, "What can I do for you? I shall be so proud to serve you. Lay upon me your commands, I am eager to obey."

"It will not do," said Cathara, as if replying to herself, "I must wait;" then rallying, "I am just as much obliged to you as if you could help me. I thank you for your kind words, spoken in such beautiful English, pure as a native. I will take some sherbet, now," she said.

The young man's face crimsoned with pleasure at her compliment, while he vanished. When he returned, a crowd stood about her, offering her one thing after another; but she stretched out her hand for the cooling beverage, and with a grace inimitable, as she tossed up the glass, and a smile he never forgot, she said, "I drink to your health and happiness."

The crowd now ebbed back to the drawing-room, and very soon began to take leave, until, at last, Cathara and Mrs. Vail, were left to watch from the window, the various vessels which looked so prettily, as they retreated from the shore, their lights dancing like fire-flies in the distance.

The gay voice of Mrs. Vail, was voluble, of the success of the evening; of the celebrities who were present; how fine the music was; such good time they kept for dancing. What a sensation, Cathara's beauty created; how she heard some one say, "he would like nothing better, than to be permitted to fall down and worship her."

“How silent you are,” at last she exclaimed.

“To-morrow,” said Cathara, sweetly, “we’ll talk it all over; to-night, I am sadly weary.”

“Ah, then,” said Mrs. Vail, “the bubbles that swim on the beaker’s brim will have vanished, and stale, flat, tasteless champagne alone be left.”

“Good-night, if you will;” as Cathara bowed gracefully and withdrew to her own room, and was glad to be disrobed as soon as possible, and to be left alone, to take counsel with herself.

After Cathara had retired, Astonley managed to say something to his sister, which quite modified her gayety; and it was with a tear-stained face, and greatly to her surprise, that Cathara met her, as she was entering the breakfast-room, clad in travelling gear, while the yacht lay in waiting to receive her.

“What does all this mean?” said Cathara, embracing her sorrowing cousin, whom she had left, the previous evening, so radiant with spirits.

“It means that I have intelligence from England, that my son is very ill. I shall sail in the steamer that leaves at 12 o’clock to-day.”

“Write to me, dear cousin; indeed I hope soon to see you in England; but I have not time for another word,” and kissing her fondly, she tore herself away.

CHAPTER XXI.

COMPULSION.

ASTONLEY accompanied his sister, and Cathara was left half the long, weary day, to plan and grow nervous again. At all events, she had given orders to her maid to be in complete readiness to leave on the following day. At three o'clock Astonley returned, and dinner was served.

He was in unusually good spirits. The first link in his plan was perfected. Never had he felt more elate, for on board of the vessel which bore off his sister, he had seen the dark, swarthy Conrad. It is true, that the last glance he received from the man, caused him a passing uneasiness, for it was the look of an avenger; but what was that to him now,—the ocean would soon divide them. His manner towards Cathara was marked by a tender solicitude. If he did not talk of love, his looks and acts bespoke it. And yet, a certain constraint had sprung up between them, which aided her, by dexterous management, to avoid the explanation which she felt was impending.

After tea had been passed by Carl, he withdrew, having put on a fresh piece of cannel coal, for the night had fallen chill. In the soft, ruddy hue of its blaze, Cathara and Astonley kept the twilight of the fast-darkening hours.

The former broke the silence, “I must leave to-

morrow. Do you not think the morning will open fair?"

"Fair, indeed, if you will let me go with you as your accepted lover;" and immediately he threw himself at her feet, and clasping her hand, he said,

"Do not let me longer drag the galling chain of uncertainty. Be generous to one who loves you, who adores you, who could kiss your every foot-print with delight. By all that is sacred in such an entirety of affection, by every good and noble impulse I feel when I am near you, I pray you to give me your heart, as I have given you mine;" then followed a murmur, soft as incense, sweet as music, in passion's deep undertone, inaudible almost, sometimes half inarticulate, words that came swift as a torrent, wild, sweet, magnetic. His eye dilated, and flamed vivid with excitement. He shone superbly beautiful in that hour of supplication and fervid eloquence.

"Mine, mine you are, now and forever." In vain the young girl sought to suppress this electric shower; to avert the confession of his infinite hopes, and dear delights. At length, he had so far expended the violence of his feelings, as to be cognizant of Cathara. "Cathara, look at me! do not, I entreat you, turn from me."

She had become entirely pale; the white lids drooped over her eyes; her lips quivered nervously; her heaving, painful breath showed how apprehensive she was lest her agitation should overpower her, and be misconstrued.

As the surgeon, who would spare needless pain, strikes at once, before the flesh has time to shrink and quiver, in a scream of agony it came,—"Oh! I cannot, I cannot, I will not marry you, so help me God!"

Like ice upon fire, the sound ran along his veins, congealing their ardent flood into a frozen channel. His brain seemed a globe of lead. His whole being, blighted, useless, transfixed. Like a death-knell it rang in his ears. There was no reprieve from those words, piercing like arrows. A black shadow fell from his brow, and swept the light out of his face ; his eyes, which had shone but a moment before like festal lamps, were now dull, spiritless, quenched.

“I did not, indeed, I did not mean to hurt you thus,” she cried, as she rose and rested one hand soothingly upon his shoulder. Her voice thrilled, tremulous as a broken harp-string. “I deprecate the evil I have done. I pray your forgiveness for the suffering I have inflicted.”

“It is your love I want, Cathara.”

“Oh ! let us be cousins once more, and forget all this, I implore you,” she replied.

“Away with your pity ; I despise it ! Your cousinly, friendly relations, what are they to me ? It is your love I want,” burst in hollow, wrathful tones ; his eyes now kindling like a serpent’s. He drew her towards him, and held her with a convulsive pressure. “Will you grant me one prayer, Cathara ?” and he kissed her brow and lips. “Be my wife, I will teach you to love me, as madly, as blindly, as I love you.”

She freed herself from his embrace.

“Hold ! do not deceive yourself, I shall never accord you that. Would all the forms of love give life to an empty vaunt ? I must be true to myself, or, how can I ever be true to another ?” a graceful disdain arched her neck, and she turned quite away from him.

He laughed out coldly, derisively.

“Vain, sophistical girl ; audacious coquette ! I am

ashamed of myself, when I think how I have wasted my time in watching for such heartless, worthless smiles, as yours—I curse you for the agony of this hour. Paltry, miserable, soulless, as you are, at all and every hazard you shall be mine," and he shook her like a reed in his strong grasp. "Absurdly fanciful, weakly romantic, distilled sentimentality. Girl, you have turned me into a madman, an infuriated demon!" and he flung her from him. She staggered, but did not fall; she was near the door, she turned the lock, it refused to open.

"Ah! my pretty cousin, I knew your stubbornness," and he held the key up before her eyes, triumphantly.

Cathara sunk down, quite spent, upon the nearest seat.

"Why not call for your maid to come to the rescue." He looked at his watch;—"Ah! it is too late. She has left your ladyship;—eloped with a fisherman, who has taken his fishing smack and gone down to live in Chesapeake bay."

Cathara looked up; was Astonley out of his senses?

He shrugged his shoulders. "Importune the house. There is not a human being left to interfere between us."

"A finished plan, I see," cried the young girl. "Where was the love that could have thus hedged me in, like a captive? Love is free as air, spontaneous as the water which flows, generous as the sunshine. Compulsory affection! What a misuse of terms!" and a flush of resentment momentarily suffused her face.

"Cathara, you see you will have to yield the point, you are wholly in my power, your irony does not swerve me, your fine spun theories we will waive for the present.

“ I would rather live with you and have your *hate*, than see you another’s. Without you, I am a lost man, I have nothing to care for,—no one can ever love you as I do. It is not a cold, passionless heart I offer you. Yield me your hand, and I will never cease striving to please you—you must give me some encouragement, or, by Heaven, there is a Priest in the house, and we will be married this night. I have dismissed every servant, there is none to interfere.”

“ Never, never,” she repeated emphatically.

He drew nearer to her; his lips became bloodless, his face inflated with a purple gorge. His voice was hushed with that ominous stillness which presages the sweep of the storm; through his half closed teeth he hissed—

“ Though I face the eternal devils; mine in graceful bonds, if you will; mine without priest or bridal, if you will *not*.”

The young girl rose slowly to her feet, steadfast and calm. She shed not a tear, she uttered not a groan, she heaved not a sigh. There was something in her upturned eyes more powerful than speech, something that plainly interrogated Heaven for help. Her appearance was startling. It was as if all earthly, material investiture had been absorbed, and the unsheathed soul, leaving its wall of flesh, appeared to have crossed death’s dark waters, and to stand alone with God, beyond all power of mortal contamination.

Astonley hid his eyes from her unearthly aspect, with a vague feeling of uneasiness; for a moment he realised how impassable was the gulf that divided them; another second, and he sprang forward and attempted to stroke her hair.

“ Now God forbid,” she cried, and sank low and

silently to the floor, as one overtaken in a death-like trance.

“What nameless stuff women abound in,” he muttered, as he raised her in his arms, and bore her to the nearest divan; he scattered some drops of water upon the transparent temples, from whence the long bands of darkest hair had fallen, leaving the pale, clear expanse of the glorious brow to assert its pre-eminence.

“Will she never awaken;” he thought, and, half relenting, as he looked at her mute features, he was about to apply some more forcible stimulant, when from her eyes the heavy languors stole away, and the soul looked forth with a retentive consciousness; and, while powerless to move a limb, it smote him as the sun smote Paul, at noonday. Discomposed, and with a certain prudent desire to adjust affairs amicably, he withdrew to the other end of the room, sat down near a table, and folding his arms, he rested his head thereon. A touch soon aroused him.

“Will you open the door for me?”

“I will carry you to your room, if you will permit me,” he said, leading her to the hall. “You are not strong enough.”

“There is no need,” she replied gently, as with faltering steps, she ascended, breathing more freely as each new interval lay between them.

CHAPTER XXII.

WHAT A COUSIN CAN DO.

NIGHT passed away, and morning came, flushed with the promise of the Beautiful Day, trailing her violet robes over the vast flowing fields of the gleaming sea.

However dark the weary woes of the heart may be, they have never wrested from nature, signs of sympathy or tokens of woe, save in that august and fearful hour, when the sun veiled itself in darkness from the presence of its Creator and Crucified Lord.

“How high and strong the arches of heaven stand, this morning,” thought Cathara. “Surely ‘sorrow may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.’” The joy of the breaking day, the golden light, the animated promise of all nature, filled her heart with hope and a prayer, that He who made the round world so sure, would not forget a poor, helpless girl, but would regard her, this day, compassionately.

Fortified against a “sense of coming ill,” she obeyed the summons to breakfast. It was served for her alone. Gladly would she have left it untasted, as she glanced wistfully towards the window, and saw a sea gull swoop near the window and cleave the air. “Oh! Bird, stay and bear me homeward on thy white, free wings,” she thought, as she sprang to the casement.

Carl had refused to answer any question that she

had put to him. "I am not at liberty," he said, as he removed the breakfast service. This was no sooner completed than Astonley entered.

With an immovable self-possession, riveted upon his handsome features, and without parley or delay, he began—

"Cathara, this day you are to choose your own fate; to be my bride, or remain unmarried here for months, it may be for years. You are wholly in my power, and if you refuse to consent to our marriage, I shall give out that you are gone to Europe, to join my sister. I shall go to Boston, dismiss your servants, secure your income from your bankers to be sent to England, to my charge, to avoid suspicion. If you continue to refuse and weary me out, I shall sail for the Continent, leaving you in the hands of a jailer, faithful to his trust. You, Cathara, have driven me to this extremity. I would have sheltered you in my arms, from the storms of life, watched over and tended you in sickness, lived and breathed but for you, and you alone. If you were free, you would marry, and my jealous heart would thirst for, and seek his life. In order to avert a worse disaster, I seclude you from the world. You shall have every comfort provided for you, books and musical instruments, and every appliance that can ameliorate your exile. But think long and weigh well, before you choose the endless, solitary hours which await you; the cheerless gloom, the loneliness, which must sink your spirit, if you cast me from you. Only say you will be mine, and all this shall pass away, unrealized and forgotten."

"You shock me with your cruel jests; you would not, dare not, put such dreadful threats into execution. This is audacious mockery," and Cathara rose with a *proud* brow and *contemptuous* look.

“Lull yourself with no such delusion. If you loathe me so far as to prefer an entire immolation to my society, then you will be permitted to quaff the cup to its bitterest dregs.” His low, firm tone, doomed her beyond hope.

Cathara sank into the seat he had left, and remained silent for some moments.

“I am growing impatient; choose you. You must decide, now,” he exclaimed, in a tone all the more fearful because so little demonstrative, without a single movement. She felt him to be implacable.

Slowly the words came.

“I have chosen. Yours I never will be; but be merciful,” and she stood before him, clasping her hands, with an appealing look. “Have pity upon me, as you will wish God to have pity upon you, when your last hour shall come. Think, I implore you, what a breach of friendship and trust you will commit, and that, too, upon your own kinswoman; and remember how this dark secret will come to oppress and perhaps overtake you with an anguish of retribution and sore mortification.”

“Then why force me to take these harsh measures? Why scorn my love, my every proffer of affection? You will find I can measure scorn for scorn, hatred for hatred; aye, far out-measure,” and he set his teeth upon his quivering lips until the blood flowed.

There was something so appalling in his look, she tried to soothe him.

“Speak not so cruelly, Norman. By all the happy, gentle hours, we have passed together, release me; and come back from pursuing this dark path. Return, oh! return; you will find that I will stand your friend in your hour of need. I have no thought of marrying

another. Why vex yourself with such needless jealousy?"

"Then promise me, that you will never marry another."

"I cannot promise."

"Then take upon yourself every crime and folly that you might save me from. I shall live and die a miserable, accursed man; meanwhile deny, if you dare, that you hate me, and would heap every species of contumely upon me?"

Fear and aversion were working so painfully within her, as she watched his distorted, angry, frenzied mien, and heard him utter these last words, that, while she tried to conceal the former, the latter prevailed to such a degree, that she could not forbear an expression of horror and shrinking, when he attempted to throw an arm about her.

"Go to your room," he said, in a bold, savage tone, "proud girl; henceforth you will find it a fortress, from which escape will be impossible. There, you will be humiliated by solitude, and the day will come when you will be glad to capitulate upon any terms."

She turned upon the threshold, as he uttered these last words, and raising her hand with an earnest gesture, and clear distinct tones—

"Death itself, or any other fate, is preferable to being the wife of a man in whose breast there is not left one spark of *honor*." She heard the lock click into its socket, and close upon her, as soon as she entered her room. One glance at the strong staples and iron bars showed what care had been taken during her morning's absence, "to prevent me from throwing myself out of the window," thought Cathara, with a bitter feeling, as she felt that the sweet air had been debarred

her. But there was a limit even to Astonley's cruelty. A closer investigation revealed a slender brown cord, by which an upper portion of one of the tall windows could be thrown open and closed at will. With a nervous hand she drew aside the movable casement, and let the fresh breeze blow, and fill the room with its free breath.

"Now, I am not wholly separated from the outer world," she exclaimed, her spirits rising, as the delicious air smote upon her fine senses with a thrill of delight. Dashing away a furtive tear, she stood a long time passive and motionless, then smiled, as she resolved that she would not begin her captivity with tears, or aught that should weaken her faculties, by which she hoped to obtain a speedy egress; and all the stratagems that she had read or heard of, as successful to escape the vigilance of bolt, or bar, or keeper, rushed over her mind. But her imprisonment was too much like a vain phantasm, which, as yet, she could not possibly apply to herself as a reality to be combated.

As soon as her solitary dinner had been served, in the small ante-room that opened out of her sleeping-room, a note was left for her; it ran thus:

"DEAR COUSIN:—Any note you may choose to send, will be transmitted to me; but remember, months may intervene before I receive it, even if you do consent to our marriage; for to that it must come at last. I now give you one opportunity more to reconsider your decision. To-morrow morning I leave, and rest assured, there is no hope of escape from

"Your devoted

"NORMAN ASTONLEY."

Cathara crushed the note angrily, and flung it from her, disdaining a reply.

Quite early the next morning, she discerned the symmetrical form of the yacht, receding rapidly from the shore, and there, yes there, wrapped in travelling gear, erect and firm, stood Norman Astonley's proud, defiant form. Cathara seized the Captain's glass, and distinctly saw Astonley's glittering eyes rest upon the tower with a lingering glance, but there lay no softness, no relenting there, only an iron look, which proclaimed a purpose vindictive and merciless. Yet she could not believe that he would not return, and close was the vigil she kept during the entire day, until the going down of the sun. A mist of tears blinded her eyes, as she turned away, and espied a note thrust under the door; and she read :

“CATHARA:—I leave you, proud, haughty, cold girl, to reflect upon the destiny you have accepted for yourself, and the desperate life to which you drive me.

N. A.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

CRAITHORNE MANOR.

LIFE is not permanent. Society is made up of elements more fluctuating than the tidal ocean, and we must now retrace our steps to that period in the summer when we left May and her mother at the little brown Rectory.

Nearly opposite this unpretentious little home, which lay at the extreme outskirts of the secluded village of Graston, extended a noble sweep of rising woodland. The trees were very old, and of famous growth. Years before the opening of my story, there had arisen a man of taste, who had planned broad avenues, and fine groupings, out of these beautiful forest children; or left some giant tree to fling down in lonely grandeur its opulent spread of bowers and chaplets, enough to tire all future bards with leafy crowns. The ancient forest mould was thickly tufted with ferns and a tendency to moss, and many lanceolated low-growing shrubs still held on to their tenantry and just fief by virtue of prior claim, and nestled about the roots of the trees, and caught and held the sunshine in a manner quite as admirable as roses and heart's-ease that rayed out crimson and purple in the gardens below. A superb terrace of natural descent took an imperial emerald sweep to the banks of the Connecticut river, on the left side of the manor house, which you

will reach by traversing a densely shaded avenue that leads for more than a mile up from the road. It is an old-fashioned, rambling, substantial mansion, built of fine dark-red brick, in the English style; with pediments plainly wrought, without ornament, and of an umber-brown stone about the doors and windows, which are low and broad.

In the rear are gardens and graperies, and fine nurseries for fruit, and off in the distance unrivalled meadows, and more remote, wheat and barley and corn fields, and white and red farm-houses. At the right of the house, and margined by weeping willows, is a small circular lake fed by mountain springs, a perfect ultramarine water jewel, that receives the homage of the votive bending willow, its dallyings and whisperings and kisses, with calm and placid front. Here, two, swans of stainless extern arch their slender necks, and contemplate their elegant forms in the translucent mirror, and make images of grace and purity and peace, as if they were endowed with some delicate poetic mission, some select thought that guides their stately movements. This lake was on the right; a pile of irregular rock, which rose at the left of the house, looked like a caprice in stone, in the midst of so much fertility; when the midday sun shone warm upon the breast of the boulder a peacock loved to come and strut its brief hour, in slowly wheeling its gaudy circuit of begemmed plumage.

For several generations the Craithornes had lived in this strong house, cultivating their pride, and lifting their heads, with their trees, still higher and more haughtily, until this race concentrated the patrician stream, leaving Mrs. Craithorne and her two children, Aubrey and Isabel, to maintain the honors of the name.

When the late Walter Craithorne married Leila Walton, for love alone, he looked for a noble and sincere life. He was disappointed. What was wrong? Was she not aristocratic, beautiful, and with charming manners? Had she not polish, and culture, and sweetness, and many accomplishments? Yes, truly. Well, then, man, do not be unreasonable. What right have you to expect so much more tranquillity and love than other people enjoy?•

So said the world, when, after a period of three or four years, it began to be rumored about, that peace, neither external nor internal, flowed within the boundaries of Craithorne Manor, but that the river of domestic life was lashed into eddies, and rapids, and boiling whirlpools, until, at last, after foaming and surging, it had subsided into a dark and sullen tide. Walter Craithorne was a man of somewhat dreamy temperament, fastidious in taste, but, above all, a lover of truth. He hated deceit, and scorned and shunned every species of subterfuge. In appearance he was a man of tall and slender proportions, of clear olive complexion, elegant and deliberate in his movements. The eye was dark and somewhat pensive, with that indescribable look which pertains to the imaginative faculty. After his marriage, a perpetual chafing of the spirit sent a blood-red flush to his dead brown cheek, and gave it a feverish look; it was the signet of a deeply-wounded pride—a pride allied to shame—and would not out.

With all his wife's choice endowments, three years had not elapsed before Walter Craithorne found that she was quite unworthy to sit at the fireside where several generations of the Craithornes had sat, who, if over-proud, were certainly very honest. A son and

daughter had been born unto him, before an entire estrangement took place. Leila Walton was a dissembler by nature and by cultivation.

The dark shining bands of her polished hair were drawn low, to cloak all truths the brow might tell, and to lend a deeper shadow to the half-closed, lustrous eyes, that moved so languidly in their orbits. The mouth was beautifully formed, the lips almost too thin, but of a bright crimson, and readily parting to disclose the ivory teeth, perfect as pearls. Her figure was slender and drooping, half hid in the ambush of a superb India shawl in winter, and enveloped in a cloud of costly lace in summer. This most stealthy, alluring creature, wore her flattering manners as she did her soft luxurious garments, to be laid on and off to suit the moment. Her passion for adulation was excessive. It was the only stimulant that could rouse her to an effort from a state of listless apathy. To be surrounded by a crowd of parasites and flatterers, constituted her life and only positive pleasure; and yet, she never seemed content, for who can be filled with the husks of life and not hunger? She had no appreciation of simple pleasures; she cared nothing for the song of the birds without, or the hum of the household melodies within. She slept away half the day; filled her house with a throng of guests, who wearied her, and yet she could not dispense with them.

She was an only child, endowed with great beauty and a bright vivacity. Her mother had fed her on flattery, as the most desirable ingredient in life. Petted, humored, a belle, how was she to live, shut up in this quiet house, without this aroma of incense forever ascending in a halo about her? When Walter Craithorne found that this household goddess, whom he

had set up to worship as something transcendent in sweetness and purity, was only a defaced and common image, he turned away from her, and became a moody, unsocial man. It drove him to resume the profession of medicine, for which he had been educated, and in which his father and grandfather had been distinguished, especially in the surgical department.

He now, also, began to wield the knife through all the mazes of the human mechanism, with a skill and boldness at once so accurate and dauntless, that while homage was paid to his success, the envious sought to detract from his laurels by averring him to be all nerve and hardihood, the result of no heart or sympathy ; preferring to award the victory to his impassibility, rather than to his masterly method.

But detraction failed to wound a man who had seen his dearest hopes mildew and perish in their brightest hour. When following the labyrinth of complex nerve and throbbing artery, to save priceless life or limb, how often would he gladly have resigned his life for that of a man who longed to stay yet awhile on earth, with the dear wife who loved him so tenderly—for, already, disappointment had gnawed at the root of that pride, whose essence had been distilled into every fibre of his brain, and life was not now sweet or desirable to him. Its semblance he still wore, for the haughty lines were his by inheritance, and in other days he had rutted them still deeper by his youthful arrogance ; but his heart had been softened by grief and experience, and was no longer overbearing, but merciful, and out of the heart are the issues of life. Fellowship and friendship he found at the Rectory ; and a taste for fishing and out-door life, shared by Edward Temple, the Rector, who believed, as he did, that many are the

evils “best medicined by Nature.” No longer surrounded by the illusions which youth and beauty could once create ; cold, contemptuous, self-esteeming, Mrs. Craithorne still pursued the dry and arid highways of life ; preferring the parched land, where only nettles and brambles grew, to the green pastures and “still waters.”

One period of frivolities, blunders, and shame, had not sufficed to enlighten her eyes ; she went on with her habitudes, her conventionalities, etiquettes and assumptions, until her face became an opaque and faded mask—withered, wrinkled, parchmented—old, without the sweet charities of age ; no flush, born of summer’s heat or winter’s cold, could burst through the cements of her dense, cosmeticised flesh.

Isabel, faithful to her mother’s dictum, grew up, negatively insolent and imperious. Her blood never sped through her veins in a rich, royal tide, but congealed, death-cold, about the heart, and left the delicate, pretty features pale as pearl. Upon this lifeless Parian marble complexion her mother looked approvingly, and called it aristocratic. To form such alliances for her children as her ambition planned, was the meteor that kept her eye alert, and dilated a sense of her own importance to a still greater extent.

Aubrey waxed impatient, and sometimes stormy, under the reiterations of his mother upon this her constant topic, and one day he rebelled.

“Though all the blood of all the patricians back to the flood leapt in my veins, if I am to be doomed to a perpetual series of lectures, I had better have been born a clodhopper. I am sick of this nauseating theme.”

“If I thought you would ever prove recreant, I

would rather have seen you perish in your cradle," replied his mother, angrily.

"I dare say; I am not in the least surprised to hear you make that tender remark. It is one of the pleasant results of pride, that it eats up all natural affection."

Provoked, Mrs. Craithorne tried to cower her son with her eye. It was a cruel, bitter look, one that had often levelled others as with a dart of steel; but it now fell harmless upon the son, who returned her glance with one so wilful, that, if it did not quail, taught her, at least, more moderation for the future, lest he should spurn her control altogether.

The young man walked out of her presence, and sauntered slowly along the broad avenue, and so down to the ponderous gates at the entrance, where a coat of arms, and other heraldic device, were inwrought in a garland of bronze.

Look at him! see how impatiently he strides from one point to another, maintaining the greatest possible distance from the house that contains his "two irritants," as he terms them, undifferentially.

He is of lofty stature, long arms, and long, slender, sinewy fingers. Profile sharp and clean cut, a broad, deep chest. A superabundance of vitality, unexpended, and almost inexhaustible, marks every movement of the vigorous limbs. He flings himself upon the grass, and the wind drifts the masses of jetty hair from the forehead, which is broad and low. A sneer curls his short, passionate upper lip, with a cavalier disdain; but as his full, deep-set gray eyes drink in the sunshine and scale the lofty trees, whose wealth of foliage flows down like a green waterfall over him, the mouth translates the passions no longer, for nature has found her lover; she takes possession of his faculties, beguiles

him with a poetic mirage, and leads him into a realm unprofaned by strife.

After having received all the dispensations which attend the English and German universities, having thoroughly toured the Continent, Aubrey Craithorne thought, with pleasure, of returning to his ancestral acres. For years, to this point his thoughts had tended, in rays of converging brightness. His remembrance of his mother and sister were not quite pleasing, but he was young and wayward when he left them.

He longed to exchange the dazzling but unreliable attachments, the fine friends, the courtly society, the brilliant adventures, the dash, the chivalry, the assumed stocism, which had lent a romantic aspect to his life, for earnest experience. He felt that he had been cheated by false fires, mocked with delusive hopes. He had lived on wine, he now demanded the bread of life. Pageants and embellishments and trappings he abhorred. They had circumscribed him long enough; and as he placed his foot upon his native land, he resolved never to return to those "dizzy joys" and "aching raptures."

In six months, however, he had learned a bitter cynicism, and when he saw how cold and calculating his mother and sister were in their fastidious exclusiveness and narrow views, he locked up all the softer portions of his nature, inscrutable to them, and almost forgotten by himself.

He withdrew from their society, and took possession of a large wing of the building, which had, in former days, been occupied by his father. The rooms, which had been closed for many years, were now opened, refitted, and furnished to suit his own taste. A parlor, dining, and ante rooms completed the first

floor; a very spacious library and sleeping-room lay upon the second. At one end of the library, in an arch formed for it, stood an organ, built of the same dark oaken wood of which the cabinets for the books were composed, and reflecting a lustrous darkness. On the cabinets are a number of busts in fine bronze; and, above these, were suspended in carven ebony frames, rare, and, many of them, ancient engravings. From the ceiling to the broad green mantle extends a mirror, embedded in the wall, looking like clear air; it reflected the opposite window; and, above it, a faded crimson banner, plucked from the battle-field of Bunker Hill, which was wreathed in a triangular form about its standard. At the apex of this hung a portrait of Aubrey's father.

The goodly mirror repeated this; and, still more, the magic of the sylvan scene beyond, where the sun lay in spots of gold upon the oak, walnut, and maple leaves, as their branches rose and fell to the pulses of the summer air.

Here Aubrey shut himself up, or issued by a separate entrance, from the main building to a vine-shaded walk, from whence he could saunter, unseen, to remote portions of the estate, or ramble far away among the hills, or, reaching the stables, he loved to rid himself of his extraneous forces by a hard ride.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SIREN.

AUBREY, agreeably to his father's command, studied the art of healing, while in Paris and Germany; but, oh! shade of his fathers, he had left the bulkier system, to which they adhered, for Hahnemann's more subtle solutions; and he now offered his services to the poor gratuitously,—a class who did not care to discuss the comparative merits of the two methods, but received his prescriptions without cavil. He loved his profession. It linked him to his fellow-creatures by simple ties. It taught him a knowledge of humanity in all its diverse phases. And when he discerned, perchance, in some weary sufferer, rare and beautiful traits, disinterested conduct, and noble manners, it realized to him a sublime hope, that satisfied and exerted the most salutary influence upon him. Like his father, every violation of truth filled him with indignation, and he would rather have died a martyr than have evaded one letter of the text.

At length, Mrs. Craithorne, who never wearied of planning until she had consummated her designs, invited Lulu Lee, the syren—young, rich, and endlessly fascinating—to visit Isabel, for the purpose of winning her son's heart. It is quite certain that this young lady would have had a “positive engagement,” if no more spicy dish had been offered for her taste than

that which Isabel's society could afford, for she knew her to be as tame as a delicately painted piece of porcelain ; and as for the country, she did hate to go peeping about at nature ; but she had heard enough of Aubrey to interest her. Invulnerable, cynical, indifferent, only twenty-six, a princely income, ah ! this whetted her spirits, and moulded her words into the most graceful and cordial letter of acceptance.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Craithorne sent for her son ; she did not like "to beard the lion in his den," but chose to hold conference, not in her own boudoir either, for Aubrey declared her perfumes stifled him, but in the old family drawing-room, where she summoned him.

He would not be seated, but chose to stand with his arms folded, leaning his back against the mantle. His mother forgave him, for his eyes were riveted all the time upon the portrait of an exquisitely beautiful young girl, an exact counterpart once of Leila Walton. He was indeed most accessible to beauty in women or children, and as he heard his mother's request that he would be "so kind as to help Isabel entertain Miss Lee, who had sent word that she would visit them during the following week," his evident admiration of the fair picture softened the tone of her request, usually put in a style of such imperious extortion.

"It will be a great sacrifice of time and inclination," he replied, abstractedly.

"But you will promise ?" she responded, quickly.

"I will promise to put myself in the most exposed position to receive the battery of Miss Lee's charms. I will offer my heart as a target for her redoubtable balls, if you think that will entertain her, mother," he said, with a half ironical smile fluctuating about the mouth ; "but," he added, as he walked off, "you

know that it will depend entirely upon the nature and extent of her ammunition, how long she keeps me from under cover of the right wing," pointing to his own portion of the building, as he walked off.

"Curious fellow he is, and so like his father," said the lady mother, as she shrugged her graceful shoulders, and went to join Isabel, and to say that she had gained her point.

CHAPTER XXV.

L U L U.

AUBREY, half screened by his library curtains, scanned Lulu Lee, as she alighted from her carriage, one summer solstice day; the sun blazing down with a light so fatal to most complexions, revealed her glowing brunette cheek in a dark rose lustre; eyes radiant—abundantly coquettish; witchery hovered about the tantalizing curves of the pouting mouth, and in the dimple which graced the chin. She took no pains to conceal the tapering satin boot, that encased her foot, as she sprang, with an elastic bound, from the carriage, and up the broad steps. For several days after her arrival, an early horseback ride over the beautiful country, and a daily appearance at dinner, comprised the extent of Aubrey's attentions to his mother's fair guest. As was her wont, Lulu kept up a careless, incessant *guerilla* warfare of wit and irony, and saucy provocative comment; at length she began to look for the usual results. But in this meridian she found demonstration, importunity, flowery gift, poetic tribute, and a host of such pretty toys wherewith she had been accustomed to pamper the over-fed *me*, sadly lacking. Truly a most arid, unprofitable land. It could not be. Lulu began to have reveries, misgivings, doubts, anxieties; and when one of this sort is preyed

upon by these strange and unwelcome companions, mark me, their Waterloo is coming.

Lulu's conquests had been so constant and easy, that she had never yet felt it necessary to exert all her latent power; but now, when she would have summoned all her forces, there was panic and inertia in the camp. Distrusting herself, all her overpowering personality fled. Anxiety, fairly lodged in the brain, routs the swift and subtle forces, and all the electric life by which it transcends the limits of ordinary ability.

After dinner, one day, Aubrey proposed a walk over the grounds. Lulu left the open casement, sped alertly at his bidding, and the two went strolling through the shaded paths, lingering to take the views as they got outlooks from the shrubberies, or paused to watch the fountain disporting with its sheaf of diamonds. Aubrey's eye followed the form of his companion, as she undulated through the devious paths before him. The gait, so firm yet springy, the watchful eye, the consummate grace of every lithe and elegant movement, suggested, in spite of himself, the royal tigress, as she appeared to him, not long before, when visiting the *Jardin des Plantes*. He felt the same species of moral antagonism towards her, the same pleasing, insidious allurement, that made him incline to stroke the soft, dappled, polished skin of the creature.

“I love to walk about a strange, beautiful place like this,” said Lulu. “I love it almost as well as to meet a strange, beautiful person;” and she threw a look over her shoulder, playful, enticing, vailed.

“I sometimes think, Miss Lee, that we are asleep with our eyes wide open; so fond we are of delighting ourselves with fallacies—fallacies which delight, yet strangely baffle us.”

“Then you trample down the imagination ruthlessly, and scorn all the pretty, soft solacings of love and friendship, as sophistries, that a breath may waft away ;” and, suiting the action to the word, she raised the snowy ball of the dandelion’s seedy tuft to her cherry lips, and blew the feathery darts aloft and over him, while she extended her eloquent right hand to catch the floating shower, with a half-malicious air.

Aubrey smiled at her audacious manner.

“Not so ; but I am vastly weary of effigies and cheats. Some would have life to be all chaplets and garlands, tin-foil and gold leaf; better far the bald and granite rock, or the gnarled roots of this old oak, in preference,” pointing with his finger, and stopping to pick up some acorn cups.

“Poor, misanthropic man,” she replied, with saucy mien ; “I wish I could metamorphose your vision, and show you a new heaven and new earth, and make life dangerously sweet to you,” and quickly facing her companion, she held his glance, with those seductive eyes, all dew and glimmer and dangerous softness.

It was a firm encounter of eye with eye; each seeking to discern the mysterious life, to solve the problem of that soul which beamed through those shining portals.

Aubrey looked disappointed, as he fathomed the dark liquid depths. He was the first to turn away, for those radiant wells held no draught to slake and refresh the transcendent longings that, for a moment, had caused a throb and strife, and a thirst within him.

“You constrain me to speak the truth, Miss Lee. To attempt a friendship with you would only leave me more insulated. You have not the power to conjure up the heavenly vision for me.”

Lulu Lee took a moment to recover herself; she knew that she had found her master, and succumbed. Like a true woman, she would gladly have laid down her weapons, and acknowledged the potentiality of her sovereign. Her heart beat like a drum to the thrilling measure of his voice and words. It was no common or apathetic nature she had surveyed and sounded with her divining scrutiny. Beyond the sharp peaks and abrupt promontories that bristled towards the common observer, she had discerned a land of springs and verdure, fanned by genial breezes, and beautiful with mantling roses.

What! She had not the power! She, who had walked, triumphant, over whole fields of prostrate lovers; she, who had taught supplication, tears, and despair, to scores without number; she, who knew her victims by instinct, and spared them not! Was the lasso over her own haughty neck, and she ready to bow at the will of another?

Aubrey was surprised at the emotion depicted in his companion's face. Like a reed shaken by the wind, she leaned, involuntarily, against him for support. No long list of interviews could better have assured her of his power over her; but pride came to the rescue.

"How the world spins round," she said, releasing herself from his sustaining arm; "a sudden giddiness affects me. I will rest a moment," and she seated herself upon a rustic chair, and shaded her face awhile.

At length, in a gay tone, she continued—

"We had almost forgotten our discussion. Why have I not the power, Mr. Craithorne?"

"Oh! never mind it, now," he replied, carelessly; "but look at the river, and see how conscious she is of the clouds that glow above her."

“Not more conscious than I of your strong nature,” Lulu thought, as she glanced at the river, and then at him.

“The dew is falling,” he said, as he stopped to raise the embroidered reticule that fell from her hold upon the grass. “Are your slippers firm enough to risk this long space of lawn we must traverse?”

She extended the exquisitely sandalled foot, the sandal cut extremely low, and lying like a mere outline about the edge of the gauzy open-worked stocking.

“Good heavens, Madam! Is that the way you dress? Mere doll shoes on your feet! Miserable baubles,” and seizing her in his sinewy arms, he carried her as if she were a child, and placed her safe upon the walk.

“It is quite surprising what pleasure you women take in defrauding yourselves of health and life. I, as a physician, am bound to reprove and condemn you,” and springing down another path, he left her, charmed, provoked, bewildered, and unattended.

Aubrey sped fleetly, under the trellised way, and on through the house, unseen, to his library. Soft globes of light but dimly revealed the faultless proportions of the draped, bronzed figures that sustained them, and left a vapory twilight that was dreamily indefinite, but infinitely suggestive.

Taking a book from one of the shelves he raised his hand to increase the lamp’s ray, but his mood changed, and drawing near to the window a leathern chair, he buried himself in its vast proportions. One star, alone, was visible through the great clustering trees, and that looked like the eye of a seraph, glancing earthward upon *him*.

Winsome and soothing rustled the wind among the huge branches, stirring the curtain with waftures of stolen fragrance. It led him off into a twilight dream. "The lady I love must be fair—a jewel without fleck or flaw. Like the Hebrew priest, absolutely without spot or blemish, from the crown of her head to the sole of her foot, shall the arbitress of my destiny be. She must not shuffle nor fawn, nor love the flavor of stolen homage, nor hunt for man's sacred life. But she shall roll the stone away from my sepulchred affections, and be the golden chain that binds me to the throne of the Immortal. She shall wipe away all remembrance of my mother's imperfections. She shall satisfy my father, when he leans from the invisible city, to look upon us. She shall make this hearth-stone clean and white, as the precious corner-stone of a church ; and then, oh, God ! my children"—and he rose from his seat, and traversed the long apartment over and over again. The open organ, with its white keys, invited him ; a bell-stroke indicated to his attendant to inflate its vast lungs. He infused his spirit into those deep organ pipes ; he poured upon them the beatitude of his reverie, and they echoed back the harmony like the mighty surging of jubilant waves. Notes and chords rolled together in one sublime sea, shoreless and boundless. All tears and sorrow, time and death had vanished under the arch of this ascending, ineffable strain, which crowned the intervening space, and launched the soul outside of time. Then, suddenly, the tide of music ceased, leaving the instrument to tremble at its base with the incarnated passion of the hour.

Irresistibly attracted, and concealed by the darkness, a lady, muffled in a cloak, reclined upon the damp

grass beneath Aubrey's window, completely subdued by the music that heaved her heart, yet incomprehensible to her as is the vast ocean to the storm-beat mariner—vague, solitary, mournful.

Half the night Lulu tossed upon her pillow ; she had made a discovery that would not permit her to sleep. It was, that she had a heart. Hearts, to her, had hitherto been myths, uncertainties, imaginary things ; now she felt an inward announcement that, to obtain Aubrey's love, she would be willing to go into all the ecstasies, protestations, proffers, devotions, that she had ever elicited from her most desperate lovers. The next morning her chagrin was so great when she saw Isabel mounted to accompany her in the place of her recent companion, that it put her quite out of temper, as the hot red flush plainly told on her face. She rode so recklessly and so far out of sight of Isabel, that the latter turned about and came home by herself a full hour before Lulu had expended her wrath. The next day she refused to ride, and as Aubrey only appeared at dinner, and was then so grave and silent that no effort of hers could draw him into conversation, she began to grow desperate. She is no longer piquant ; she is no longer charming. In laying down her arms to a victor, she has lost all power to be natural, to be individual. Her eyes were continually seeking his. If she espied him during the day, crossing the grounds, she ran to accost him ; she sent for him to walk with her, during which an almost entire silence reigned, unless she took all the conversation upon herself. A few days more, and she must take leave, and that with the probability of not soon meeting Aubrey again. This thought caused her to make incessant efforts to secure his society. Misguid-

ed, injudicious woman! Had she not learned how hopeless it is to attempt to rivet affection, where there is no positive inclination. How many of her lovers had taught her to hate them by pursuing this same course. All her philosophy could not sustain the disappointment of her hopes; and one night, as she wandered by herself under the stately trees, she drew near to listen to a wild and fitful melody—one of those German constructions that Aubrey had learned to fancy while acquiring the music of that school.

The sounds allured her steps nearer and nearer. The night was warm. The door stood partly open; Lulu entered noiselessly and walked about the lower rooms; gaining courage, she began slowly to tread the staircase. She reached the library door; it was ajar; she entered, unheard, and sat down in the nearest chair. A painful incertitude beset her; at last she rose, and with quiet steps approached him. As the music ceased, she threw her arm about his neck. He was startled for a moment, but had sufficient presence of mind to listen until his organ attendant had vanished. Then he unlaced that soft arm impatiently.

“What does all this mean?” he asked, in a stern voice.

“Oh! forgive me,” said Lulu; “I only know that the thought of losing you fills me with such indescribable misery that it has brought me to you.”

“Sit down, Miss Lee. If you did not look so in earnest—but stay, you are giving me a specimen of your dramatic ability. Very well acted, indeed; pray, don’t let us play at foils.”

“Aubrey, you know that I am acting no *role*
¹³¹
hess, a ¹³¹ tell, then, let reason mount guard, and you will

find that the interest you profess for me is only a delusion. Hitherto you have gone on in the unreined play of your despotism. You have come to a point in life, where you have met an obstacle, and it has made you restless, like a curbed steed."

"Your words are chill as ice. Mitigate my sentence. I do not ask to rule as sovereign; let me be your subject, and pay the humblest devotion. I will ask for nothing but one little standing place." Her face grew pale with rising hauteur, as he turned, half contemptuously, away. "Ah! scorn me as you will. It is always ever so wrong for a woman to speak out her mind. You regard her as the mere recipient of your favors, your charities, your declarations. In what way, pray, have I committed such flagrant outrage, that you must put this harsh face upon the matter?"

Aubrey spoke in a low, soothing voice: "Forgive me, if I have appeared hard and repulsive. I would not willingly spurn a living creature. But is not coquetry your occupation, your whole aim in life?"

"It was. Then, I had never seen what I now can never forget, or cease to love. You despise me, because when I saw that you were disinclined towards me, I still persisted in seeking your attentions."

"Yes, Miss Lee."

"Well, tell me now, you who ought to be physician to the mind as well as body, if you fulfil your duty, what would you do if you were in my place? Is there no poison you can mix for me?" approaching him with a forced calmness, and laying her hand upon his arm.

"There must be a thousand innocent pleasures left for one so young and buoyant as you," said Aubrey, compassionately, surprised and grieved to see her late blooming face looking so wan and haggard. "Not

in seeking them as pleasures, but as duties, obligations, sacred responsibilities, which every one of us owes to God and himself."

"Ah! it is all very well for you to discourse philosophically, when your heart is out of the matter. I have done that all my life. Love like mine does not stop to reason placidly. I tell you, that, you it is, who are turning me away from the only source by which I am stimulated to emulate goodness. If you would but give me one hope, that, by years of keeping my heart pure, I might approach near to you, to claim your love, as my reward, I would weed out every unworthy trait, cut off my right hand, outpluck my right eye, storm heaven itself for loftiest virtue, and holiest soul. Oh! say, would there be hope then, for me? Speak, Aubrey, and have mercy upon me?" Wild sobs and tears choked her utterance, as she threw herself at his feet, and clasping her hands, looked piteously up to him.

Aubrey raised her, instantly. "Calm yourself, Miss Lee, you are over-wrought."

"And you are cold as marble, if not cruel; but I must know; is there, indeed, no hope?"

"Sincerely, I believe none, whatever." She rose and walked nervously towards the door, then came back and said in the most beseeching accents: "Must I go back to weary, monotonous existence, and take nothing but this sorrow with me, into the lonely world?"

"There are many worse companions," said Aubrey, in a voice full of feeling. She would not regard his gentle tone; the words angered her; and as she parted the long hair that hung dishevelled from her face, her whole frame dilated with pride and ungov-

ernable passion, and, extending her arms with vehement gestures, she wore the look of a pale Fury.

“I will bequeath it to you, then. Be custodian of it ye walls, ye pictures, ye books: reflect it into his eyes, thou mirror; distil it into his ears with every note of music, and give unto this man the full measure he has meted out to me of the pangs of unrequited love.”

She ended, and sweeping her white garments quickly out of the door, ran wildly out of the room, and down the staircase. Neither Mrs. Craithorne nor Isabel missed her; she was wont to be so unreliable and erratic in her movements, and she locked herself into her room, without her agitation being observed or questioned. The fierce, tumultuous girl, wild by nature and undisciplined by education or self-control, rolled on the floor, a prey to the most reckless determinations. In the calm glossings over of society, and its firm customs, her wishes all gratified, her whims petted, her fancies consulted as oracles, she recked not of what manner of spirit she was; a spirit that, now thwarted, in mad fever dreams boiled in her veins, and which, in the stillness of the midnight, sent her out, to wander over the enclosures, and to tempt her to throw herself into the river’s bed. The first coming beam that marked the sun’s path, and which shot redemption over the blank eastern sky,—over the dead landscape,—over the still house and its slumbering inmates,—over her own wretched figure,—affected her with a mysterious influence. The placid sweetness of the new day-break hour, to which she was unaccustomed, allayed her frantic, implacable frame, and enabled her to work some transformation in her woe-begone appearance before the breakfast hour.

Let not those whose passions have been strung with feebler power, pass sentence upon this reckless girl. Even this pampered child of fashion, had felt the destroying nature of a life absorbed in vanity and its unsatisfying gauds. She recognised, in Aubrey, a superior character; she believed that he had the power to impart to her a better life, its delightful peace, and final blessedness.

The same species of disappointment, might have caused another woman to have gone through life silent, uncomplaining, enduring—but not the less blighted and broken in spirit. She was not one of that multitude, who only ask to steal through life unnoticed, and to pine away, unseen, beneath the pressure of a burden. Cast in another mould, she had never learned how greatly submission can mitigate. She would not resign. Something she must do. She wrote Aubrey a note requesting him to “accompany her that morning—their last ride.”

Aubrey was specially antipathetic to a woman of Lulu’s cast. He was chary of his pity towards her, and his countenance attested how unwelcome was the summons, which he prepared, but slowly, to obey; and only from a sense of courtesy, as a last act of compliance to his mother’s guest.

Mrs. Craithorne, and even Isabel’s inadvertent eye, noted Miss Lee’s pale face, when she entered the breakfast-room, already equipped in her riding-habit. She pleaded headache, as, with a mechanical smile, she forced herself to rally Isabel upon the expected arrival of a young gentleman, who had just returned from spending all his fortune upon the Continent. He had made proposals for Isabel’s hand. The *prestige* of the Livingston name, and the expectation of a large inher-

itance from an uncle who had acknowledged him for his heir, won a consent from Mrs. Craithorne, and the young lady now said :

“ Oh, I shall send for you, Lulu, to stand as first bridesmaid.”

“ If you wait so long as two months, I may be off the tapis myself,” rejoined Lulu. “ Two months is an eternity ! ”—and truly, the long day before her after she should have parted with Aubrey, hung like an impending, endless doom that extended moments into years. The horses were led up and Aubrey assisted Lulu to mount. What majestic repose breathed from the grand old trees, as they rode down the stately avenue. In the open country were hedge-roses and elder blossoms strung around with great wreaths of dew pearl. It was such a clear, still, shining morning, templed over with God’s blue crown, and girded about with majesty and excellency. It might as well have been a vaulted tunnel, with mean glimpses of sickly daylight, so far as Lulu was concerned, for Lulu had no pleasure in it. She was distasteful to herself, and utterly despised the goddess whom, formerly, it was her delight to make gay with great libations to her vanity. In vain she sought to conjure up the overflowing spirits which always, before, had come to her aid. If there be fulness and wealth of joy in mutual love, there is a fearful suffering in being repulsed; a clamor of unreasonable anguish, wounded pride, wounded vanity, cries out with a pain that only time can alleviate.

She hoped that Aubrey would notice and pity the suffering which had stolen every trace of color from her cheek.

Vain illusion ! Was ever man’s pity, much less his love, won by witnessing the ravages which sorrow and disappointment have caused in a woman’s beauty ?

Women have first pitied, then loved ; man, never. He turns away, hardened into a sort of contempt for her lack of pride and womanly fortitude. He is sublimely skeptical about affection where his own is not enlisted. Aubrey's glance at her when she sought to meet his, betokened this truth too plainly to be disguised. She almost reeled from her horse, in her weakened state, as this conviction, so mortifying, struck deep into her heart. She would not bend her energies to still the conflict that raged like a tempest within her. She urged on her horse unduly, and far past that of Aubrey's, when a kite, entangled in a neighboring tree, flared out before the eyes of her horse, and the affrighted animal plunged madly down the way. The terrified girl strove well to maintain some control, but before Aubrey could come up to aid her, she was thrown to the ground, where she lay insensible. It was just in front of the Rectory gate. May Temple, busy with her flowers, saw the riderless horse rush by ; she opened the gate and looked out ; then ran instantly to the motionless girl, and was in the act of supporting her head when Aubrey, alighting from his horse, raised her in his arms, and bore her into the house.

May ran for water, and bathed the brow and delicate hands. Lulu heard Aubrey say, as she awakened to consciousness—

“ She has only fainted ; no material injury.” She opened her eyes to see a fair, angelic, pitying face, half shaded by long clustering tresses, and to meet the glance of the sweetest blue eyes that she had ever seen.

At this moment Mrs. Temple entered, her face expressive of alarm. May turned and sprang towards her: “ Do not be agitated, dear mother ; a lady has

been thrown from her horse ; she is not hurt, but has fainted."

" My mother, sir," she said, introducing her. The stranger bowed low, and offered her a seat. Aubrey, after glancing at Lulu, who was now half sitting, and leaning her head upon her arm, as if to collect her faculties, said, " he would mount his horse, and return with a carriage for Miss Lee." During Aubrey's absence, Lulu, restless and wretched, half wishing that she had met with some serious injury which would have alarmed him, and claimed his care, and prolonged her stay, rose, and, gathering her long skirts over her arm, commenced walking about the hall in a sort of abstraction. Mrs. Temple urged her to remain quiet, but she paid little or no attention to May or her mother. At last, wearied out, she sat down upon the steps that led into the porch, where she remained, with her eyes fixed upon the ground, until the carriage arrived ; she then sprang in, without remembering to say one word of thanks to the kind inmates of the Rectory. Not so, Aubrey. He entered the house, asked if this was not Mrs. Temple, the wife of his father's dear friend, and pleading great remissness in not having done himself the honor of calling before, he requested that he might be allowed to do so at an early hour, and with many earnest thanks for their kindness to his mother's guest, he took his leave.

Angered at herself for her lack of politeness, provoked at Aubrey's stay, which she exaggerated into an endless period, she broke forth,

" Those people seem to be rather decent, respectable people ; of the lower class, evidently."

" Are you familiar with the lower class ? " replied Aubrey, not moving a muscle of his face.

"If they are not, said the inconsistent girl, how can they endure to live in such a little, mean house, and low rooms? I was afraid I should suffocate, and so walked out to the porch."

"And yet, Miss Lee, it is only in a home simple as that, that I forget to think of the skeleton behind the door. Disquietude and grief seem to love to enter the abodes of the rich, the gay, the proud. From these I do, indeed, turn away with distrust."

Arrived at Craithorne Manor, Mrs. Craithorne and Isabel ran out to express their sympathy, and assist Lulu into the house.

"Were you not afraid of infection," said Isabel, "while you were obliged to stay in the little old house?"

"I tried to keep my vinaigrette in play all the time," said Lulu, not wishing to appear less refined and sensitive than her friends supposed her.

"There is gratitude for you," said Aubrey, with a peculiar smile.

"But the presumption of the middle classes is truly revolting," said Mrs. Craithorne. "I dare say that they tried to enter into conversation with you?" Then, addressing her son, "Did you ever see such a little baby face as May Temple has?"

"Is she not the daughter of the late Rector?" said Aubrey, quietly, "under whose preachings and teachings you have sat all your life, until his death made way for the present incumbent?"

"What an odd way you have of putting things, Aubrey! I only know that I do not think her a fit associate for your sister."

"And yet, her father was my father's best and truest friend;" and he walked away; nor did he ap-

pear again until Lulu Lee had departed, which she did with a chaos of conflicting feelings striving one against another.

Aubrey had been so satiated with society abroad, that, upon his return home, he turned away with indifference, and shunned all acquaintances. But on the Sunday following the meeting with the Temples, to see this same "baby face," that his mother had so derided, he made ready and drove to church for the first time in many months.

"Thomas, does your mistress ever go to church now?" he asked, of the coachman.

"No, sir; her health is too poor, and Miss Isabel rises too late in the morning to be in time; and she tells her maid that it is not fashionable to go to the afternoon service."

Aubrey alighted and entered the large square pew, from which the mourning hangings had never been removed. "My mother loved my father no more than she does me, or she could not always forsake this memorial-looking seat," meditated the young man. "How often my father has prayed here. With all his pride he had a feeling heart, and loved the church, and, had he lived, might have loved his son as I now love him." The windows of the old church were open, and the green drapery of the weeping willows, swayed in and out by the breath of the wind, made a pleasant sound of rustling leaf and pendant bough, and flung their lights and shadows over May Temple's lovely countenance, as she sat not far from Aubrey. His eyes were riveted upon that sweet face, set off by the simple white straw, its white ribbons and delicate lace border; so exquisitely fair was the complexion, so innocent and calm the expression, that he could think of nothing—

nothing but how well her beauty satisfied his longings for the purest harmony. Her face was a song-evangel. He could pour out all his music to her. She would inspire new thoughts. How then could life go hard with him, when he made hers all bloom ? Then, indeed, they twain would be fitly joined for temple service. As she rose to repeat the reading, Aubrey was so intent in studying every feature that he quite forgot to move. For one instant May caught his fixed glance, and her own reflected a recognition of his presence, and then, through all the after service, or at its close, in vain he sought her eyes.

This piqued and pleased him. After church was over, he ordered the coachman to drive slowly, for they were just in the rear of Mrs. Temple's little pony chaise. It stopped at a place ere they arrived at the Rectory, where a venerable looking old man came out and greeted them, and a lad, handsome and earnest, stood by May's side and talked.

“They have companions ; some one with whom they can interchange their thoughts and feelings ; while I have nothing but my old trees ;” so spoke the rich heir of Craithorne House.

“Truly, man's life is poor without the benediction of a friend.” These words Aubrey read from a little manuscript book, which he had disinterred from a mass of sealed papers belonging to his father. He broke the seals on this Sabbath afternoon, and from its pages he learned how close and pleasant was the tie which bound his father in friendship to the late Rector.

It contained no allusion to his domestic infelicities, although written in a pensive strain ; but was the record of the gradual unfolding to his sight of the infinite beauty and grace of a life consecrated to virtue,

and "by which," he wrote, "I lay hold, with fervor, upon the promises which are made to those who overcome the world."

"By the grace of God, and through the unceasing ministries and intercessions, and faithful friendship of my friend Edward Temple, have I been brought to drink of the waters of everlasting life, and I am now at peace with all past, present, and future."

"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God; and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name."

"Anno Domini 18—."

The paragraphs which I have quoted were the concluding ones, and affected Aubrey with a solemn tenderness. As the Sabbath sun went down, Aubrey extended his walk beyond the manor gates, and followed the well-trodden footpath that marked the roadside. Thyme and mint beset the air with their sweetness. He unlatched the little wooden gate set in the yew-hedge, that girdled three sides of the burying-ground. Nature had been so lavish of her trees and green acclivities, that the spot was exempt from the peculiarly desolate, sterile appearance which, in former days, marked these homes of the dead. From many of the enclosures the wild grass had been carefully clipped, and upon Edward Temple's grave white roses grew, and were blooming, while a wreath of violets and myrtle, fresh plucked, and woven in thick embrace, and laid upon the base of the tall white shaft, evidenced the recent presence of some regardful hand. Was it that

of the young girl whom he had seen at church that morning, with brow so consecrate and fair? thought Aubrey. Gloomy, in comparison with the green graves, appeared the heavy iron doors that opened into the stone vault built in the hillside. More inexorable and relentless seemed the grim monarch to surrender his hold upon the Craithornes, who were assembled there in ghostly conclave. Above the vaults and mounds, and recording stones, the bright purple clouds of evening, warm and lustrous, with edges of gold and crimson, floated and lingered, as if smiling on death, and its mournful appellings, its sad monitions, its futile efforts to keep imprisoned even the perishable material dust, beyond a short and fleeting span. What a spirit of divine stillness brooded over the scene!

Aubrey left these peaceful precincts, and passed on by the meadows, still girt in the distance by hill and sylvan wild, until his eye rested upon the little brown house where the Temples lived. It wore an aspect of privacy and sweet seclusion, embosomed, as in a bower, under the drooping eaves of the great elm tree.

“Is not the air full of good angels to-night?” thought Aubrey, while he uncovered his head, as if hoping to receive some new-born blessing. A delicate suspense enthralled his senses. “I will not enter—not yet—not now. I will be distraught with my sweet vision yet awhile: a closer knowledge may extinguish its glow.” He hears a voice—the words are so distinct, they fall, one by one, upon his ear.

“Come, sit a little nearer to the window, dear mother,” said May, entwining her arms, and almost lifting her mother’s slender form, and seating her in a large easy chair. “The air is delicious with jessamine and newly opened tube-roses, as the garden of Eden was to

lovely Eve ; and I want you to see the faintest semi-circle blossoming in the upper world."

" May," said her mother, " you are not more of a woman, nor less child, than you were two years ago."

" And yet, then I was seventeen ; now I am nineteen. Your little daughter is growing *very* old, is she not ?—Nineteen to-morrow—only think ! Mother, are you tired of your little old daughter ?"

" I was thinking of your father, then. How greatly your brow and hair resemble his. It seems inexplicable that God should have taken him away to himself, when his life was so useful, and his child needed him so much, and left me, a poor, fragile woman—a mere cumberer."

" That I might have something to love and watch over. I sometimes think I would not have you strong for the world ; it is so pleasant to wait upon you."

" Dear good little daughter," pursuing her thought, " he can never come to us ; but we may go to him ; to that great end let us live a life blameless as his, that we may dwell with him, in Christ our Saviour."

" We will try," said May, troubled by one concealed remembrance darkening her thought and menacing her with future evil, because she had concealed, nor dared to confide it to her mother, for fear of impairing still farther, her fragile health.

" Sometimes," pursued Mrs. Temple, " I fancy I hear your father call me, May. Many others have had a similar fancy, and it seems natural that the well loved tones should, at times, roll over our senses with the force of an annunciation. I feel, not dimly, but of a truth, that I am drawing near to the final home. Do not weep, sweet, tender heart ; what are we all but *pilgrims*, and soon must be strangers to this earth.

Death will be a kind friend, come to release me from this worm-out, overspent body."

"I shall have no one left to love; no one to love me;" said May, sorrowfully.

"The Lord will provide," said Mrs. Temple, fixing her eyes most wistfully upon May's tearful face; "but shed no more tears; I will try and live to my utmost span, my bonnie child," kissing her cheek and smiling, brightly. "Now get the Bible, and read your father's favorite Psalm. I am too weary to sit much longer."

Aubrey was so absorbed in gathering each word of this conversation, that he forgot to reproach himself for being a listener. Pure home affection, unbought and uncalculating, was novel and sweet to him.

"I have found my jewel without fleck or flaw," he said, as he slowly sauntered homewards. "Sole descendant of a priest, sacred as Jephthah's daughter, the lilies of the valley are not purer than she. I drift no longer. I will write my name in the palms of her hands. I will give my life for her love."



THE OLD AND THE NEW.

THAT evening, Mrs. Temple had touched a chord in her daughter's mind, that thrilled most painfully, and kept her watchful, long after her mother was sleeping tranquilly. She wearied herself with thinking of that sad, delinquent hour, when she had plighted her faith to Norman Astonley. Their acquaintance of a fortnight, their marriage, consummated without forethought, and born of the emotion and overpowering faith of the moment, his absence since that event, a lapse now of almost three years, caused this miserable secret to assume a character so entirely dream-like, as to render it almost impossible to be regarded in any other light. Even the countenance of the bridegroom, by some unaccountable caprice of memory, flitted away from her mental contemplation, and became intangible and unreal.

Compelled, by every impulse of womanly pride, to banish all thoughts of one who had slighted and forgotten her, and for whom her affection had long since been pronounced by herself as a passing infatuation, she would have thought it her highest duty to have ignored this strange episode in her life altogether, had she not been troubled with vague apprehensions and indefinite ideas with regard to its legal importance. *Suppose she divulged her marriage!* To asseverate,

was all she could do. Proof she had none ; and he too in England.

To live on in utter hopelessness, was entirely against May's naturally cheerful, happy disposition ; and feeling in her own heart, that Astonley would never come to claim her, and with no desire whatever but to be left unmolested and with her mother, she rose the following morning with her anxieties once more fled away, and with the glad heart of a child. If it were wrong to be happy under the pressure of such adverse circumstances, she could not help it. She was of temper the softest, gayest, the most susceptible to the sunny side of life ; turning as naturally as a plant to warmth, and sunshine, and beautiful nature. Why should the sun light up the world with gladness, and every fair created thing shout forth an anthem of joy and beauty, and she repine, morose, or sullen ? It was impossible : and she stood in the porch, with the south wind lifting the curls from her innocent face, and freshening the tint upon her cheek every moment. She gave herself up to the harmonious play of her spirits, as she fled down to her garden plot to gather a few flowers with which to adorn the breakfast table ; and she skimmed among her plants, as light as a bee just setting forth on its honied path.

It was a beaming face that greeted her mother as they participated in the morning meal.

“ Oh, mother ! the world is almost too beautiful. After breakfast, you must come and see how prettily the wheat looks, tied in neat golden stacks, and the vivid green of the buckwheat contrasts so well with the groves of sumac trees, now covered with those long maroon colored spikes that you admire so much ; and off, in the distance, high waves the great trees at

the manor ; and then our own flowers, a thousand have unfolded since last night. I think I feel richer than any queen. I will give you a nice little drive to-day."

In her mother's face was reflected the glow of love which kindled her own. It was sweet to be all in all to each other ; enthusiastic in simple pleasures ; and Mrs. Temple gave thanks each morning that she had been spared another day to comfort, cheer, and love her fond little daughter.

It was not in Aubrey's nature to muffle his feet in a very long patience, and no time, worth mentioning, elapsed before they became persistent in securing a pilgrimage of almost daily occurrence to the brown Rectory house. He felt at home there. He loved to sit in the seat which Mrs. Temple pointed out as his father's favorite. It was pleasant to glance at his father's portrait, and feel that the eyes followed him with looks of approval. Mrs. Temple was fond of gathering up' the recollections of the past, and dis-coursing to Aubrey of them. From time to time he dealt her some simple medicines, which absolutely ap-peared to invigorate the waning powers of her broken constitution. And who shall blame her, as, with in-creasing interest in, and reliance upon, the young man, she should think of him, sometimes, as the future pro-tector and husband of her daughter. She frequently saw his eyes wander in quest of her, and she found that her retrospective annals lost some hold upon his atten-tion if May were missing ; but not one syllable of this would she have hinted to May for the world ; she was too prudent for that. May was a most industrious little person ; the very soul of labor animated her clever fingers, as they fabricated one garment after

another, or winged her feet, as she ran to fulfil some kind errand to some of her father's old parishioners, of whom three or four still lingered, dependent on that bounty which Mrs. Temple must share with some one.

Aubrey was neither easy nor indolent, and yet he grew quite put out with this "everlasting sewing, absorbing occupation," as he termed it one day, when his soul was thirsting for one glance of May's blue eyes, and he broke out into a remonstrance.

"I am sure, Miss Temple, that fore-finger of yours will be speared to the bone in a little while, if you do not cease from your unnatural efforts," and he drew near, and taking the jaconet she was attacking, out of her hands, he ventured to lift the martyred finger to a grave inspection.

"I remember reading in a book the other day," said May, naively, "that no gentleman ever liked that a woman should sew in his presence."

"And what reason did the author give for this aversion?"

"Oh, I did not mean to go any further," said May, laughing with a natural abandon which was perfectly delightful in one so young, "but the reason was that you were all so vain that you could not bear the rivalry of even a needle."

"No more one can at times; but it depends upon who wields it."

"It is the attitude that sometimes wearies me," she said, rising without a particle of coquetry, and standing by his side, graceful, unconscious, blooming, healthful and perfect as a flower. "I would far rather be out of doors all the day long," and her lips parted as if for a sigh, but she suppressed the emotion, lest her mother should hear her; but the overpowering heat

of the morning had charmed the gentle lady into a quiet repose. May suddenly turned and saw the refreshing slumber which rested upon her face, as it lay back upon the chintz pillow of the easy chair. Placing her forefinger upon her lips, she looked archly up into Aubrey's face. She was like a delicate symphony toning his thoughts to perfect unison with his better self, and imparting a sense of cordial content.

How eagerly he questioned himself as to her regard for him. Did she love him? Could she find him worthy? Would she respond to the electric current that was speeding through his veins? He watched her; but everything she did—all her simplest acts appeared to him to be folded in a strange, rare mystery. She baffled his discernment, and seemed of so volatile an essence, he never was able to hold her to a close inspection. A lover's excited imagination, who shall tell what marvels it beholds?

In her own mind May had settled Aubrey's future destiny. He would, undoubtedly, marry that beautiful and haughty girl whom accident had brought to the Rectory one morning. Perhaps she over-estimated pride, and wealth, and position; there are very few to whom these do not seem too formidable. At any rate she regarded Aubrey's visits as condescensions and pastimes to amuse himself. She thought him great and strong, like the kingdom of Nature, noble and grand in his ways, for she was subtle of ken, and one of nature's darlings, too.

The nameless spirit that lurked and lured her in the beauty of the landscape, was personified in Aubrey, and beckoned and wooed her unconsciously. For him, how natural it would have been to have sported and smiled, or defied each moody rampart he

might build against her entrance to his heart. Like an elf she would have scaled them all, had not one dread interposed its black shadow, and taught May to take the law of renunciation for her companion and guide. Therefore it was that May often absented herself when Aubrey came, or vanished, like an illusive sunbeam, when she got sight of his approach. She also made her mother promise never to leave them alone, and when her mother rose, upon the plea of indisposition or that restlessness which an invalid so often feels, May guided her mother's steps, and Aubrey was left to come and go, *sans ceremonie*—and so, often he comes, stepping in with true foot and heart, desirous of bringing only the best gifts of love and honor to this home—and often Mrs. Temple tells May how much it cheers her to see him, and of the joy his father would have had in him had he but lived.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ILLUSIONS.

At the Craithornes, life is measured out with stately mechanism. The stranger, as he leans from his carriage, gives himself up to the enjoyment of the scene. He rolls under those towering trees, gazes upon the smooth terraces, the velvet lawns, the rich bloom of the flowers, the crystal lake and its floating swans, the graperies, hot houses, the river that gleams at the foot of the meadows ; and dreams of days without pain, nights of unbroken repose, hours halcyon with refined and beautiful culture.

He enters. Interposed between his curious scrutiny and the bleak reality, range a goodly armament of costly vessels of gold and silver. The world has been ransacked for treasures to keep the front of life forever smooth. Carrara marbles, hewed into images of spotless purity, and divine symbol, lure off his imagination into sweet delusions of intellectual sympathy. Mossy carpets enthrall his feet. He gives himself up to the enchantment of this fair external show, nor thinks it possible that satiety, weariness, indolence, blunted moral sense make life a mean, dark, under-current of stagnant things. It was considered quite a privilege to obtain leave to inspect the fair trickeries, and fine pieces of art, that abound here, and oh ! *how many*, as they rustled their silken garments.

through those luxurious apartments, longed, and sighed, and coveted all this deceiving fabric.

In the drawing-room, on a *fauteuil* of pale blue satin, sits Isabel, the pearl, the mother's pride and reflex. Her lover is beside her, lisping insipidity, as he opens the purple velvet caskets against whose royal die the jewels sparkle, like mimic fires. Isabel never rebels against cold prolonged formalities; she has just the heart and brain to endure, and not know that it is not the highest form of happiness. Just now, to have some one altogether amused with her—consulting, planning, devising about the wedding, is as much exhilaration as she could bear without fatigue. She considers herself immensely happy; aristocratically happy. She contemplates her lover's bridal gifts with complacency, as hostages and pledges against poverty. She can form no vivid conception of any other evil, except a low marriage. The heavily be-whiskered youth, who was soon to claim Isabel for his bride, had been received with high favor by Mrs. Craithorne. A Livingston! and such a fortune, as soon as Death should come to give the third stroke; two had already paralyzed, and made as good as dead, the wealthy relation. The lover, perfectly contented, nay, blest in his leaden apathy, that sneered at anything beyond and above his comprehension, as wanting in common sense. He thought himself the pivot of the universe. What could be more nicely adjusted than he? "He liked to see a man well balanced." Horses and hounds form the staple of his conversation, for it is not long since he returned from England, and he loves to talk of what he calls his adventures.

"Well, Belle, I am glad if the stones please you; they are really quite essential for a woman to have on

full-dress occasions, merely to avoid observation. I hate to see a woman peculiar ; or man either, for that matter."

" Oh ! yes : one is expected to have them, for I am asked, all the time, what presents you gave me."

" You need not be ashamed to show these ; I thought of that when I selected them."

" Did you ? How thoughtful and kind," said the young lady ; " I should have hated to have been mortified by finding them inferior, but these are splendid."

" Well, put the baubles up ; I think we shall have a good day to-morrow. I am sorry you are not fonder of horseback riding, Belle. Oh ! if you could have seen the runs we had in England, it was blind game, such jolly fellows as we are, when we hunters get together."

" And then you have such a commanding figure, and sit a horse so well."

" I grant you all that, but I sit a little too heavy ; those English riders told me that I must lessen my tonnage."

" Can't you starve off a little ? " said Isabel, in a tender voice.

" Pretty hard that ; a fellow gets so deuced hungry who drives and rides as much as I do."

" It is hard."

" I've tried to bring myself down by smoking ; twenty cigars a day ought to do it."

" That is such a handsome horse of yours ! "

" Oh ! I don't care for beauty. I never was led away by beauty yet ; it is the merit, the sound sense of the creature ; she understands every word I say to her."

" She does ? "

“Yes! and such a trotter! I had rather be shot, than travel like a tortoise. I hope you like rapid driving. I will give you a specimen to-morrow; but don’t you be frightened or touch the reins, I never forgive a woman that.”

Isabel had a mortal fear of a gay horse, but she was equally cowardly in confessing her timidity, and trusted to some excuse to get rid of the threatened airing.

“Oh! how delightful that would be,” were the words, however, which met his ear; and farther his discernment sought not to penetrate; indeed he averred that he always “saw right through a thing at the first glance, no one need try to deceive him;” in which comfortable frame we will leave him and his future.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A CRISIS.

At the Rectory, very early one still morning in mid September, as May Temple collected seeds from the ripened cellules, and planted bulbs, and gathered flowers out of a little plat near the entrance-gate, she heard a voice sound over her head like a trumpet ; so quiet was the hush in nature, so near the speaker, so quick sped her faculties at the summons of that conjuring voice :

“ Have you plighted your love-troth to nature, that you always seem so much in earnest to correspond with her flowers ? ”

“ Yes,” said May, without even looking up at Aubrey, “ nature is my knight-errant, my gypsy, who tells me my fortune every day.”

“ And did she warn you of my coming this morning, so that I failed to startle you into paying me the cold respect of a look ? ”

“ You deserved to fail, if that was your intention ; but she only tells me of that which belongs to me.”

“ And do not I belong to you ? ”

“ No.”

“ Well, *these* do,” releasing from the saddle-bow a *jardiniere* of dark wicker work, and handing it to her, while, springing to the ground, he bore a large basket filled with flowers.

“The morning was so fair, it called me to come and take a holiday here with you—bonnie Lady May. Where shall we go to arrange these buds and blossoms?”

“Indeed, I do not know,” she said, half bewildered at his glistering look, his tone, and earnest manner, as he led her swiftly towards the porch, and placing her on one of the wooden seats, he drew the *jardiniere* towards her. It was filled with white sea-sand. He knelt before her, as he lifted the flowers, one by one, from the basket..

“The wreath of fuchsias first; now wind it, so that it will fall over the curve of the basket.”

May raised the superb flowers, interwove them quickly, so that the pendants drooped like little cells.

“‘Ladies ear-drops’ is the prettier name,” she said, now perfectly reassured by his cold tone.

“The large white lily in the centre, there; the stem is too long. I will cut it. That will do. These straw-colored roses come next. ‘Cloth of gold,’ their name. How delicious the perfume,” raising one gently, and shaking from it the morning dew. Pure as the gods’ ambrosia, it is fit to encircle the lily. Here are campanulas; I love their blue calyxes. Yes, next comes the crimson roses mixed with sprigs of mignonette and passion flowers. These pansies next, two leaves dyed in gold, and three set in purple velvet’s darkest shade. Pink daises against these ‘forget-me-nots’—Here he paused so long to look at May, he forgot to go on; no wonder, she was so much fairer than the flowers. She reminded him, her eyes cast down, by saying, “I am waiting.”

He continued. “Red rose-buds now, bright as the

heart's ruddy drops; geranium leaves, and, last, these white-streaked violets. No more. It is perfect now," and bending forward, he kissed May's hand, her curls, her white robe, and, quicker than thought, he had reached the gate, mounted his horse, and was lost sight of in the clustering trees. Another moment, and Mrs. Temple opened the door.

"Oh, May, how fresh, how exquisitely arranged! I need not ask you who brought you such rare flowers. They could come from but one garden. Aubrey is as fond of surprises as his father used to be. He had a faculty of coming and going like no one else. Your father used to say, 'Craithorne is fond of surprising me, and I love to be surprised by him; and as many years as I have known him, he still continues to have that power over me.'"

"Why do you always call him Aubrey, mother?"

"It is so natural. I have heard his father speak to him often by that name." May took up the standard and carefully carried the flowers into the parlor, then hastened to join her mother, who said:

"How pale you look, child. I am sure you are not half so well as when you took those long rambles with Miss Clyde and your cousin Pierre. You are too devoted to a poor invalid mother, May. Promise me that you will go out this afternoon for a long ramble. This morning, I know you are engaged with your Sunday scholars."

Oh! how gladly May assented. "It will be a cool afternoon, and I can follow our little brook to the deep ravine; there is fine rambling there."

"And I will try and go off into one of my long afternoon sleeps; for this pain in my side troubled me *too much to give me any refreshing slumber, last night.*"

"Oh! how sorry I am, mother; I was fancying that you looked so well."

"I shall be better after I have slept."

The children had their lesson explained to them; were made happy by some cakes and bright nosegays; but yet the minutes lagged to the impatient girl, who longed to be alone, unseen, in her favorite haunt.

The fresh air failed to allay the fever of excitement which glowed scarlet upon her cheek and lips, as she hurried on.

"I will not let him see me again; I must not, must not let him declare his love more fully. What shall I do, to show him how impossible it would be to realize such hopes." Walking rapidly on she came to the wild ravine, where the brook broke into thin currents and spread itself among the gray stones, where old primeval trees tangled their branches aloft. The greenest moss allured her; she sprang from a shelving rock to reach this inviting point, with a heedlessness that did not stop to regard Aubrey, who, partly hid by a large rock, now sprang up and caught May directly in his arms.

"Oh! mercy," screamed May, laughing nervously for a moment, then tears of vexation rolled down her cheeks. She was very much agitated.

"How did you chance to be here?" she said, when she could speak.

"Ever since I left you this morning, I have been in the woods among the trout streams. These," he said, lifting up some water-lilies which covered a row of the pretty fish, arrayed in their coats of pearl and flecked with carmine spots, "these will tell you the story of my occupations; why I am here, evidently so greatly to your discomfiture," and he flung himself

impetuously upon the moss-bank at her feet, and holding one of her hands a close prisoner, he leaned upon his elbow and looked at her half-averted face.

“God knows, May, how I have watched to see if you care the least for me;” at length he broke forth, “that I love *you* with my whole soul, here, in the wildness, the freshness, the loneliness, of this dim woodland, I must speak of it to you. All the day these leaves, which dance in myriads above our heads, have, each and all, whispered your name. The bright shining cloud, as it hovered near me, was your pure spirit. Here I have thought of you, here I have longed for you, here I have loved you. These little blue bells, emblems of constancy, which I have hidden in my heart, were your sweet eyes, May, that looked upon me from every crevice; as I have sheltered them upon my heart, here would I hold you,” flinging his arms around her and drawing her close to his heart, “for life, for death, for time, for eternity, my bride, now and forever; oh! say, speak one little word, one sigh, a breath, my love, my hope! ”

There are moments when the truth will well up, be the results however disastrous; and May, who had vowed that no word of Aubrey’s should win from her a confession of her love for him, was powerless to keep back her secret, when he, the proud, haughty soul entreated; all reminiscence was lost sight of in this hour, with the tones of that miraculous voice commanding blessedness to her.

As she raised her head the verging sun encompassed her wavy hair with a cloud of gold, from whence her eyes, like starry amethysts, lingered for an instant upon his face with a fixed, sad look, that spent itself without a word. Although her lips had parted to speak, the syllables exhaled in sound imperceptible.

But as Aubrey gazed upon the face, so alluring its mingled expression, and feared lest she were not of mortal mould, and would fade away ; the sun dropped down behind the vapory hill-tops ; he saw, yet, for a moment, he could not believe it, her lips quiver ; she unclasped his arm, rose with a quick decision, and putting a space between them, she half leaned upon one of the rocky ledges near in a hopeless, listless, attitude ; the eyes were hid under the drooping lids, the face steeled and colorless, the expression one of shrinking and dismay.

“ Say at once that you love another ? ”

“ Oh ! no, no, no,” cried May, in great agitation.

Borne far out of his ordinary mood, Aubrey felt this unaccountable manner of hers, that could imperil their union in such a moment, as something capricious and uncalled for. It startled him lest there were hidden traits which he had not observed, and which would demolish and cancel all further hopes. The old, haughty, earth-born aspect darkened his set lineaments ; his eyes were sullen with the cynical expression that ordinarily smouldered there, as he rose, and with looks and tones as cold and foreign to his former impassioned manner as Jungfrau to Vesuvius, standing near he contemplated her in silence for a few lingering moments, then he addressed her—

“ I do not like riddles, Miss Temple ; I saw your love for me quicken and glow and pale in my arms ; you need not fear to tell me why ; one cannot always master the expression of these subtle antagonisms.”

Oh ! what bitterness pervaded this glacial politeness, as he waited her answer.

May looked up, and was conscious of the whole heaven she had blotted out. It roused all the gener-

osity of her nature to spare him what pain she could, yet she had sworn to preserve her secret. A sort of desperation breathed through the ghost of a smile which she tried to wear; her eyes looked up to his, bleak, and drear, and tearless, and her voice sounded strange to herself.

“It was not appointed to me to make any one happy beside my mother on earth. You would be sun, and dew, and light, and shade, to one who loved you as they ought; but as for myself, honor commands that I should live alone. I know all your goodness, I thank you for your love, but I cannot accept it. I am not worthy of it. There, do not question me; I tell you that a sore sorrow, it may be ignominy, separates me from you. Is not that more than enough?”

“Oh, heaven! May, this from you. If you could but imagine how I hate complexities, prevarications, or concealments, you would deal more frankly with me. I think I could forgive you almost everything, since I have your love, for so far I distrust your words. Tell me, May,” speaking with infinite tenderness in his voice, and embracing her gently, “I have your love?”

May was silent.

“Speak out, I pray you. Oh! May, May, I thought your life had been so sequestered, so hidden. I thought my little May would be all mine, that other lips had never spoken to her of love—fond, baseless, empty thought!”

His voice sounded discordant with suppressed anguish and disappointment, as he went on—

“Is it your hand that distils poison into the manna that fell like bread from heaven to feed my hungry heart,” then suddenly he turned with a look of enraged pride.

“ You do not mean to say that you are really unworthy, that you have trespassed beyond reinstatement ? ”

He started forward, grasped her arm, and looked inquiringly into her face.

A blush mounted to his forehead when he saw that she did not understand him ; he hastened to alter his question—

“ That you are committed by solemn engagement to another—for nothing but that could separate us.”

“ The circumstances are so very uncommon,” she faltered out with difficulty, “ and I have pledged my word not to divulge the promise that binds me, for I am bound to another.”

“ Does your mother understand this secret compact ? ”

“ No.”

“ And pray how long is it since you have seen this mysterious arbiter, who holds you in durance vile ? ”

“ Nearly three years.”

“ Do you not think,” he said, a bitter irony inflecting his words, “ that when he considers the brevity of life, he ought to have a little more consideration on that score, unless he is an officer on duty ! And now, methinks, I did hear there was an officer visiting at your mother’s, but that was recently. Is it your cousin ? ”

“ No, oh ! no,” she cried, dashing away the tears that she had kept under so bravely. His ironical tone she could not bear. She rose with decision, resolved to put an end to this interview. Looking about,

“ It is almost night, and I so far from home. My mother will be alarmed.”

With undue haste she pressed forward eagerly ; a

mist blinded her eyes ; she staggered and fell over upon a sharp rock, her hand twisted under her. Still, she tried to sustain herself upon it. She had sprained her wrist, and the pain for a moment was intense, and she fainted. In a moment after she recovered, and found herself borne onward, light as a feather, in Aubrey's strong arms.

"The night is falling, and the dew has made the stones slippery," he said, in a gentle tone. "I will carry you through the gloaming, the dark trees invite early twilight to visit this glen ; without, I still see the purple edge of day."

May could not thwart his kindly purpose ; involuntarily the uninjured arm crept round his neck ; one tiny hand unwittingly drawing closer still.

Aubrey felt her light embrace descend as balm ; her breath, sweet and innocent as a child, stirred her silken curls against his cheek, like the soft wing of a dove, instinct with love and tenderness.

CHAPTER XXIX.

DISCORD.

Mrs. CRAITHORNE had been informed that Aubrey went almost daily to the Rectory. He was allied to her old enemies there; for such she persisted in terming them; and she looked upon Mrs. Temple as a designing woman, one who, with the late Rector, had been made the depository of all the unhappy differences between herself and her husband.

She had, at last, deluded herself into the belief, that, but for their influence, there would never have existed any estrangement between her and her once passionate, worshipping, lover-like husband. It was very clear how little she understood the man she had wedded, and how greatly she wronged him in supposing him capable of unveiling his wounded spirit for inspection, even to the friends who had so loved him. Nothing could have angered Mrs. Craithorne more than to see Aubrey led off by the same delusions, as she called them, that had gained ascendency over his father; and what was far worse, perchance, to see Aubrey bringing home that "little nobody," as his wife. This last consideration she had frequently discussed with great heat, and in no measured terms, with Isabel; it at last drove her to open conflict with her son.

She often scanned him, unobserved, from her win-

dows ; she had learned to know whenever he returned from the Temples, by his aspect and mien. She had no sympathy with him when he looked happy. I believe her inner conviction pronounced it decidedly vulgar to appear cheerful ; or to show that any thing in this world was quite satisfactory to the lordly demands of the Craithornes, seemed too much of the spirit of contentment best befitting the “vulgar herd.”

As a duty to society, to keep pure the breath of its aristocratic nostrils, and free from plebeian taint and degradation, she resolved not to spare reproof upon this most fitting occasion ; so she waylaid the young man, one afternoon, down by the great gates of the manor, just after he had sauntered away from his heart’s Eden.

Aubrey read her wrath at a glance, and, with a pleasant air, deprecated it.

“ Shrive me, mother, I have eaten of the forbidden fruit, and I do love May Temple. Why deny it ? ”

“ You do not suppose that I will consent to receive a woman of such low fortunes and connections for my daughter-in-law ? Never, Aubrey, never. Thank heaven, Isabel will soon be placed far beyond all danger of such contamination. A country curate’s widow’s daughter, without one penny to her name ! That is, indeed, a proud alliance for the last of the Craithorne race. There must be recreant blood in your veins, as in your father’s, that causes you to play vagrant for days together, scouring woods and streams like some common poacher, and finally neglecting the high born and beautiful, endowed with grace, and cultivation, and wealth, and distinguished connections, and selecting a *common weed*, that grows in the dust of the roadside.”
She stopped for want of breath.

"I sincerely wish you could forget my existence for the future," said Aubrey, in a voice trembling with passion. His mother drew her skirts angrily back, as Aubrey passed her quickly, for his temper was up, and he would not trust himself, nor stoop to bandy words, where argument was wasted, nor try to make the truth appear to one who shunned the sight of it, when it was plain as crystal day.

As Aubrey pursued his way on through the flowering shrubs, the roses looked faded, as if blighted by mildew; the green terraces, sullen and formal; the mimic lake, hollow and chill;—and, as he strode on, choosing the main entrance in his way, all the home virtues appeared to his excited mood to be turned out of doors, and to lay bleeding upon the threshold. He crossed the main hall, the chairs seemed weary of stretching out their arms to thankless guests; the great clock ticked with a dreary sound. He sprang up the staircase, each stair groaned at his weight; the little cupids sat uneasily upon their carven balustrade, threatening to down topple their over-laden baskets upon some doomed head. He passed on with haste to the gallery, by which he could reach his own apartments; then he sat down and breathed more freely.

Reader, did you ever meet with one of those unhappy people who could sweep the universe clean of all sweetness, by their rankling, discordant tongues—best typified by the rattlesnake, whose rattle would make desolation even amid the paradise blooms of Euphrates' garden?

Sometimes Aubrey lost both sleep and patience under this new surveillance of his mother's. She sent notes of lofty condescension to May, threatening her with everlasting condemnation, if she dared to brave

her opposition and marry Aubrey against the consent of his family. She sent for her son when he was at the Rectory, upon the most trifling pretext, exaggerating circumstances, and annoying Mrs. Temple and May in a variety of ingenious ways. Aubrey smothered the fires that would else have consumed all sense of filial duty; kept in abeyance his strong temper, laughed at her anathemas, circumvented her plots quietly, did all he could to keep out of her way, and be patient; for he foresaw that his helpless sister Isabel would claim and receive his mother's society and attention for the remainder of her existence, from sheer inability to continue her automatic life without this mainspring, and leagues of distance must soon divide them. This last consideration would have brought him satisfaction if he could have obtained from May a consent to their marriage. There was not one step gained towards that point. This mysterious persistence of May to guard a secret which, she had confessed to him, even her mother had not the slightest knowledge of, overwhelmed him with a sullenness and anxiety so intense as to make his love a torture. Harassed with vain conjectures as to this unaccountable reserve, he almost regretted the affection which had gained such ascendancy over him. With a soul full of tenderness for her, often he appeared in her presence sullen and dark as a tempest, pacing the little parlor to and fro, or pausing before her with a solicitous, questioning air, seem to demand and await some kind of explanation—some word that should unlock this hateful secret and give it forth. In such moments their love became a torment to both: she lamented that she had ever been so unfortunate as to have won his love, and he chafed at being *the lover of one who shrouded in impenetrable folds*

a strange phantom which menaced and threatened to wreck their happiness. Perturbed, anxious, impatient, with a heart ready to expend its best treasure of devotion upon her, he was held aloof; and by one so gentle, yielding, tender; one not made of that stern stuff which combats and resists, rendered her tenacity all the more remarkable. When she saw his look of reproach, disappointment, and wounded pride rest upon her, she would entreat him to leave her.

“Go, go, Aubrey, I beg you will leave me; leave me altogether;—and trust me, if I could shiver the chain that binds me, by breaking a sacred promise, I might feel justified in doing so; forgive me for having caused you so much pain, and forget one who is destined to be unfortunate.”

“Then I am destined to be unfortunate, for you are certainly my destiny. Alas! why should we be fulfilling that wise old adage of Shakspeare? This tormenting variance is the lover’s doom. God knows, I always intended to take my love in a thoroughly rational manner, based upon so plain, so genuine a foundation, that it could not be subject to the woes of fanciful love; but here am I, in the midst of solemn appeals and infinite ebullitions, dashing, like a madman, against some unseen obstacle, whose precise nature you do not think fit to entrust to me. What empty, impious promise have you made?”

“Do let it console you that I am not worthy of you,” said May, hiding her face in her arm, which she leaned upon the end of the couch.

“That I will not believe; you could not then have gained such ascendancy over me. You are too inexorable a judge of your own conduct; too ruthless towards yourself. Be more pitiful to yourself and to me.”

"On my life, not at all," and May raised her pale, set face. "I ought to have been sterner, more uncompromising. I only wish I could make you forget—"

Aubrey interrupted her, "May, you make me forget every thing, my pride, my determination, ay, almost my honor; do you think if I loved you a whit less, I could consent to stand in such uncertain relations to you ?"

May could say nothing; she only looked at him, and extended her hand, with the sweetest, most melancholy smile imaginable.

"Tyrant," bending upon her looks of unqualified delight; "you know too well your power over me."

Never had she appeared invested with such loveliness as now. The new anxieties which had dispersed the April sunbeams that had come again to play, so cannily, over her face, left slumbering in her eyes a pensiveness, an intensity of expression, more alluring. It told of heaven yet chained to earth. It bespoke more plainly the richness and depth of her nature, her kindred to all fair things. Her beauty wrought upon him as something mystic as the evening star; and although he was reluctant to acknowledge it, was not his love doubly intense that it had met an obstacle ?

Several days had elapsed after this interview, during which Aubrey had been staying himself upon pride and patience, until dreadfully weary of this melancholy diet, he persuaded himself that, to be forever shut up in the groves and woods—a musing, dreaming man—was ignoble, unnatural, and selfish. How unvarying and detestably monotonous was isolated experience; it was character without light, cloud, or the excitements which the encountering of similitudes and opposites would bring. Yes, Love is a philosopher, and can

reason; or he is a saint, and prays; or an enthusiast; or he is a subtle metaphysician; each and all to suit his turn. Just now, he was trying to shuffle off his mania and making it carry a sensible text, such as, "It is not good for man to be alone," and, fine echo to his thought as he saunters in the direction of the little brown house, (he always saunters that way,) comes May, just as her poor scholars are dismissed from her guidance. Some say, Love takes no note of time. Believe it not. He anticipates chronometers in their remorseless dole. Aubrey joins her. She does not like to show that she is glad to meet her sunburnt lover; that is against the law which she has laid down for herself; but a close observer might see a furtive gleam of pleasure steal over the transparent complexion.

"I hear the brook babbling for pure ecstacy of joy. Why should not we, May, be as happy as it, the few remaining hours of this perfect day? Come, walk beside me. I like to see the wind chase your curls and the long blue streamers of your gipsy hat. I like the deep blue of your airy dress, which floats like the sky about you; I follow it with pleasure everywhere you choose to lead me."

"What, here, even in the burying-ground?" turning to go in to the enclosure.

"Yes here, even here; but not yet," leading her away.

"When I think of the unhappiness that I have brought you, Aubrey," she whispered in a low voice, "I have longed to lie down here by the side of my father. These pale tombs seemed to welcome me; the roses that grow there are white as those of a bride's chaplet; here the birds sing sweetly in the trees all *the day long*. The willow caresses the sod with a

loving embrace ; the wind fans the broad leaves of the chestnut with a pleasant sound ; angels appear to whisper repose to the released spirit."

" Not another word in such a strain," interrupted Aubrey. " Look how abundant is the promise which the grain-fields proclaim. The gleanings will soon be over. But see at this little cottage door, how the sun melts through the transparent globes of the purple and white grapes. We will go in through the gate to the orchards and get some of those golden bell-pears for your mother ; they are hanging low from the old pear-trees. Plenty is written all over the land. The sun looks into the windows of the great barns with a benignant smile, to see them filled with the fragrant tresses of the hay, filled to overflowing," pointing to the farmer's large barn they were passing. " Look, May, at the sinewy oxen as they pass along the road, with their ivory horns uplifted, like the strong gods of the Egyptians. They are bearing corn to the mill, where it will dance merrily in the hopper, at the sound of the leaping stream we saw when we walked by the ravine on that day that I told you of my love, amid the lone rocks. Do you remember it, my darling ? "

He was bowing low to catch some sound that parted from her lips, when a carriage (they had returned to the road sidepath now) drove slowly by. It contained Mrs. Craithorne, Isabel, and her lover.

Obeying an impulse too strong for her control, Mrs. Craithorne launched her sun-shade with an aim unerring, in the quick passion of the moment, at May ; it would have spent its force upon her, had not one instant sweep of Aubrey's arm dashed it back under the carriage-wheels. They could hear the light ripple of his mother's scornful laugh, as the wind led it back to them.

May saw Aubrey crush back the hair angrily from his forehead ; he looked dark and discomposed.

" It does not signify much, Aubrey ; never mind it ; it is but a little matter," said May. " She does not think me worthy of her son."

" Her insults are great. Oh ! May, if you would but give me the power of atoning for them. You must allow me to interfere ; banish your scruples at once ; I will broach it to your mother, and let our marriage take place at once."

" Not for the universe itself," she replied. " I thought I had defined our position clearly enough."

" You have done every thing but define it. Where, when, with whom did you form such an unalterable engagement that it can never be broken ? "

May was pale with consternation, as she faltered out, " I cannot reveal another word."

" Then, May, I must leave you ; at least for a while, an indefinite period. I must absent myself, travel, go abroad. I can endure this uncertainty no longer, and be near you. I have not moral fibre enough for this constant strife of will, thought, and purpose, over love, time, and sense."

" I cannot, must not bid you stay," said May, the tears standing thick upon her lashes.

" So you really wish me to go, to forget you ; then this engagement must be of a more serious character than I ever dreamed possible. God knows, May, whether you have done right thus to keep me in the dark."

" Oh ! I have not the least right to seek to control you in any way. I cannot even ask you to continue to remember me."

" But I shall, I fear, to the utter blighting of the only hopes that make life worth the name."

A chill of despair settled cold on May as she heard these words, and her lips quivered as she spoke: "I know not what the future has in store for me; for the present, I must submit."

"Be cheerful, May;" and tears fell upon her pale forehead as he pressed her close to his heart in a long farewell embrace; then turned and went away quickly, not trusting himself to say another word.

CHAPTER XXX.

ALONE.

WHILE inland, the autumn enshrined warm summer in a trance—a splendor of orange haze, that left her still to dream on of cloudless, golden noons; down by the sea the pensive days come in early. The landscape which lies along the Jersey coast, assumes a russet hue, lined in with patches of purple and scarlet. The sun then never levels his arrows over the sea, without casting an impassioned glance upon these rare tinted relics, that fringe with regal dies the borders of the cerulean waves. But bleak and biting north winds bring on thick weather and clouds too dense, sombre, and unyielding, to let in a single transmuting beam for days together. A number of these had given a dreary look to Philip Hinton's sea chateau. From the ivy leaves that encircled the projecting window in the tower, the rain had washed the last crimson frost streak. Cathara had long stood at the window watching the dizzy drops as they dashed and strove in capricious blasts against the walls of her tower, or, as in a momentary lull she could hear them drip, drip, with a dull, monotonous sound, from the ivy's faded garniture down on to the rocks below. When the wind shuddered off into semitones of vague distance, as if fearful of being swallowed up by the hungry, tortured waves, *it did not calm the restless surge which lashed in its*

bold billows like great cavalcades, or an innumerable host of fugitives, ceaseless and successive, fleeing to reach the shore, and there were dashed into leagues of tempest and whirling foam.

Cathara felt her heart beat high in her bosom and every pulse ring to the mad measure of this wild storm music.

She would open the unrestricted portion of her casement and let the rain dash over her, the wind entwine with her hair; then she felt kindred to vigorous out-door life, then she sometimes heard cries from the sailors or the captain speaking through the trumpet to his crew. Guided by her glass through blurring veil of mist and sleet, she watched the little vessels disappear into the dark troughs of the sea, or ride aloft upon the liquid mountains.

This partial enfranchisement enabled her to battle against the paralyzing influences of her lonely life, and filled her mind with a sense of strength and courage which would have sought the extremest verge of dangerous exploit, to save or succor a fellow creature. Oh! how she envied Grace Darling, bold navigator of the stormy ocean, whose waves succumbed to a spirit so fearless and true. These were her strong hours; but when sky and ocean took their loveliest hues, and haleyon breezes decoyed her with thoughts of her home, her freedom, her friends, then she pined listless and longing for her liberty.

She had no reason to complain of her jailer, nor of his aid, a middle-aged woman, grave and silent as the tomb, although she had failed by any sort of bribe, commendation, appeal or other inducement, to move them out of their daily groove.

Carl never would converse. She might as well ap-

peal to the idle waves, as hope to elicit aught beyond a shake or nod of the head. He could not be betrayed into the least curiosity or pity. She failed even to catch his eye, so true was he to his reticent education—and yet she felt an instinctive reliance upon the man. He was most solicitous, punctual, and orderly to secure her comfort in every thing, provided she did not infringe upon any of the restrictions or attempt to pass the boundaries of her prison. These comprised three rooms in the tower, and a large open space in the attic above, lit by a sky-light, where Cathara set up her easel and where she took exercise.

Cathara was of so sanguine a nature, that she did not at first despair of finding some method of egress, and she rather pleased her fancy with thoughts of the novelty of her position—it seemed impossible that it could last—and she had often courted solitude in a measure. She hastened to trample upon her softer moods, resolving that neither tears nor lassitude should weaken her determination to out-master the power which her kinsman had so treacherously obtained. She was diligent in resorts to pass the captive hours away. By the aid of the sea-captain's glass, whose use Carl did not know, or he would have banished it, she marked the various craft that appeared, noted their rigging, burden, and commanders. When the vessels came quite near, she had no difficulty in perusing the features of the latter; no eye ever seemed to turn or rest upon the old chateau; it was evidently looked upon as uninhabited, and was too familiar an object to the old cruisers to attract attention. It was, however, a link to her kind, although their weather-beaten faces were neither conscious nor sympathizing or familiar; *all unknowing* as they were of the watcher whose eye

rested upon them with vigilant observation. Cathara had quite exhausted the store of books which constituted the captain's library, when one day she opened the sea-stained Bible, which contained the following :

“ This book has often served me, Philip Hinton, as chart and compass and rudder, in many a stormy and dangerous hour ; it shall stand for my pilot when I drift down the dark waters of death ; I trust in its promises, and believe that it will surely land me, sails all set and nicely trimmed, in Heaven's snug harbor at last. I commend it to all earth's pilgrims and travellers wheresoever they may be. It will be found a very present help in time of trouble.”

“ The Lord on high is mightier than the voice of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.”

Cathara read, daily, large portions from this Bible. It seemed extraordinary how beautiful this little, old, sea-stained, saffron-tinted book appeared to the young girl. No missal, set round with vermillion and gold illuminations, and closed with hasp of gems and fretted work, could have so satisfied her. Here was an announcement that, solitary as she was, there was a light that would guide her through all the dim hours of the uncertain future. It spoke like a consoling presence to her ; and if it were her own overwrought mind that caused the volume to glow and burn, she was not the first, nor will she be the last, who can see a brightness and a gleam not born of material light.

Cathara had given the last stroke to a painting which had occupied her happily for many days. It represented a dismasted vessel driven on to the coast, still tossed with foamy crests, although the clouds were breaking. Their bases wore a deep purple black hue, but above they divided off into wavering meshes of violet and crimson.

The form of the cross stood by the edge of the lone sea-washed strata, like a beacon to perishing souls; upon one of its dark arms rested a dove, glittering in a slant sunbeam, snow-white, from whose presence darkness and tempest fled away, and a divine pitying soul looked out from its soft eye. When she had finished it she carried it down in her arms, and drawing a little table near a mantle, she tacked the canvas above it with some small nails which Carl had granted her. In the afternoon, when he entered to replenish her sea-coal fire, she saw him bend low to it with an ave of worship.

One morning, as Cathara paced the rounds of the attic for exercise, she espied a large crate, half leaning, in one of the dark corners. She tried to pull aside the woven straw cover, which was marked in with strange figures, and had an odd, foreign look, when the time-worn box fell to pieces, strewing the floor with its medley of contents. Charts, and log-books, and nautical instruments; Persian shawls; a Turkish scimetar and poinard; a number of oriental books and casts, and some manuscripts in the Italian language; a large portfolio of engravings, apparently gathered from every renowned city of the old world; also a journal kept by Captain Hinton, when travelling in Russia. This *omnium gatherum* proved a treasure house. She carried from it, from time to time, such of its contents as pleased her fancy, and read in her room. Carefully she looked over the engravings, and whiled away many long hours in gazing upon some pictured representation of ancient cities, or some face of beauty which art had transcribed into lasting characters—some Fornarina, whose glance lived and looked forth as in Raphael's *womanly* ideal. Here, also, were birds painted with

plumage of Tyrian dyes, and whose forms were new to her, as well as the names imprinted underneath. These bright colors were as music to Cathara's eye, wearied, as she had grown, of the monotony of pale sea-green and clouded blue. She selected a group of Alpine blossoms, whose roseate blush had been reproduced, brilliant and faithful to nature. She attached this to the curtain which draped the foot of her bed, that her eyes might rest upon this delicious bit of color when she first awakened, and bear her mind to her beautiful winter garden, where she had delighted to gather all the most elegant specimens of the floral world. From the journal of some months, which the old Captain had kept in Russia, she found honorable mention made of a descendant of the Chevalier Bayard, a former minister to that court. The name was a magnet that kept her eye riveted to that page, and it caused her to peruse many others, in hope to find it again. It thrilled her bosom with a new sensation. For she who had been so self-reliant, so self-sufficient, who had desired rather to live out her life alone, than to be too much fettered by love's bondage, now felt the soft pleadings that she had once triumphed over, come back like an echo which has lingered on long after the first sound which awakened it has gone forever. It troubled and delighted her; for, in that solitude, there seemed but one thing in the world desirable: it was a true, a tender love. At first she combated this undermining of her former strength; but as the days visibly shortened and became more dreary, she felt a wretched *ennui* stealing over her and obscuring her interest in every pursuit which had hitherto occupied her; she therefore turned more and more, for relief from herself, to the contemplation of Pierre's *buoyant, happy temper, and free, joyful sympathies*;

his energetic, unpretentious performance of whatsoever he deemed a responsibility ; his healthful, sportive fancy ; his generosity, his strength of heart, and frankness ; aye, and attraction to and love for her.

She was quite successful in drawing a sketch of his face, and the drifts of light brown hair, the firm contour of the haughty mouth ; but how could she depict the young valor which shone in his clear glance, or copy the beautiful disdain which lent such nobility to every movement ? She well remembered the very tall, slender form, encased in the blue uniform, which he wore with the usual becomingness. Oh ! Cathara, these are dangerous dreams. Love, with its infinity, its divine spirit, its wavering from earth to heaven, its ecstacy and cross of suffering, is born of a thought. Cannot our thoughts, which are spirits, people solitude with forms of radiance—make a desert flower-mantled with verdure ? Here, in the silence of her isolated life, she gave, unsought, unasked, her love to Pierre. Where was he ? Was he near or far ? She would dwell upon his memory, hang over his pictured semblance, until thought should traverse space and carry to him the secret of her love. But when many, many days took wings and flew away, and winter began to draw nigh, Cathara found her resources rapidly failing her, notwithstanding her utmost efforts. Dulness, inaction, almost torpor, seized upon and deadened her faculties with dire despondency. She would lie motionless for hours upon her couch, apathetic, and uninterested.

The eternal requiem of the melancholy sea, became the saddest of all imaginable sounds. Some presentiment of evil haunted her continually. She could not sleep at night as she had always done. She was too

indifferent to take exercise ; besides, the weather had made the unwarmed loft so damp, chilly, ungenial, and unstimulating, and too unlike the out-door atmosphere, to cause her to seek its gloomy precincts. She longed to die ; to pass away quietly into another world. What were all the fair things of earth to her, entombed in a living grave ? Oh ! how many times her heart flew to the little brown cottage under the tree, where she was sure all was happiness and peace. While May envied Cathara, Cathara coveted May's simple home. How blind are mortals ! Can we never accept our own cross ? This depressed state did not come upon her all at once ; it was not until after many struggles and throes of passionate endeavor, many beatings of the spirit to surmount its weakness.

Cathara was but a novitiate in suffering ; when she felt the doors close between her and the outer world, she did not, could not, imagine what a doom is written for the solitary prisoner, no matter what may be the extent of his resources, or else her heart would indeed have quaked and quailed.

There was no hope of moving her jailer, Carl ; and the woman, his subaltern, was more flinty and obdurate and unimpressible than he. The awful stillness of her life prostrated her with the burden of stagnation, which gradually began to assume the form of sickness. Cathara refused to rise, and left her meals almost untouched ; the beautifully-rounded proportions of her form fell away, the color left her cheek, or burned with an irregular hectic flush ; the rings dropped from her slender fingers ; her eyes appeared preternaturally large, and shone from out their finely-moulded orbits with a fitful lustre. A note, lying at the threshold of

her door, one day, aroused her enough to stagger to it, raise it and devour the contents. It ran thus:

“Lady, I take the cross which you have painted, as the sign that you are to be initiated, and therefore I have sworn to introduce you into the holy embrace of the Roman Catholic Church. I do not keep you here to win the munificent bribe from Norman Astonley, or to satisfy his revenge, but it is to show you the only way to gain entrance into heaven—I only live to serve my church. I have waited, patiently, until your proud spirit should be broken, before I presented to you the body of Christ for your acceptance through the most Holy Sacrament, which will soon be offered to you as a seal and sign—after which, your imprisonment can be dissolved for the consecrate peace and sweetness of a conventional life, where penance and prayers shall redeem your own soul, and, I trust, that of many other heretics from eternal retribution.

“ANSELMO, Priest of the Order of Jesuits.”

A new dismay froze the last hope, to which she had clung, as she saw outspread before her the double mesh, which had ensnared her. She wearied herself with turning over this complex anxiety, until apathy and vacuity submerged her faculties and she fell into an unrefreshing slumber, too weary to strive.

She did not make the slightest response to the note of the priest. She knew that it would be but the beginning of a contention for which she had no strength. Firm in the faith of her mother, whose little prayer book she now pressed more closely to her heart, she shrank from having her religious convictions disturbed. *To hear some one speak, to mingle with her fellow-*

creatures, even as a nun, was better than this utter isolation. Yet she could not disclaim her own, nor take up another religion, conscientiously ; but that she knew would not offer the slightest difficulty,—it being the conviction of the Romish Church, that time and penances and prayers will bring the most refractory into subjection. Cathara shuddered at the idea that she was to make a choice between the life she led and a convent. She resolved to put it away from her as a snare. To the surprise of Anselmo, no answer came. He saw that the meals he prepared were left quite untouched. It was time to change the current of her thoughts, lest his prize might escape him.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A U T U M N .

MAY, meanwhile, tended upon and smoothed all the rough places for the feet of her gentle mother ; secure, at least, in following this path sedulously. She permitted no ineffectual grief over the past, no sad hopes for the future, to blight the daily domestic life, where every word of love and smile of considerate affection, is of a value inestimable. And her mother, who knew that something had separated the lovers, with infinite delicacy forebore to question her daughter, but rewarded her cheerful efforts with looks of tender approval, quiet glances of perfect content ; looks which grow fragrant for recollection as years hallow them.

Their affection for each other was a pure bright rill, in which the dear pleasures of home-life sparkled and reflected some hues from Heaven, where all is love. A deep gratitude abided in their hearts, and endowed each day with light and beauty ; which, although sickness, disappointment, and anxiety had entered to dwell with them, brought no bitterness. Every week, some of the poor old people, who had been parishioners of her husband, assembled in her neat kitchen, to be instructed, warmed, and clothed by Mrs. Temple.

This was the last of those many charities which, *like a silver thread*, was interwoven into the pattern

of her life. How acceptable was the language of the sacred Book, as she read portions of the Psalms and Gospels to these earnest listeners! Her manner was subdued and humble, her aspect so reverent, her interest in all their sorrows so compassionate, as to elicit an attachment most sincere. They loved her counsels, and often repeated them to their children as words not to be forgotten. Mr. Somerton and Paul were welcome inmates to this quiet home. In the heart of the former, the conflicts with earth's lower creatures had been met and past, and heaven's unclouded peace stamped his brow with the purity and guilelessness of a child. The earth was full of millennium glories to his discerning eye. The bird that winged its airy flight from bough to bough, the bright rippling of the merry brooks, the rosy apple, as it dropped in its full ripeness from the tree, beguiled and charmed him. He often wandered with May and Paul to the woods to enjoy the marvellous beauty of the autumnal tints; than which there is certainly nought in the wide realm of color half so bright and beautiful. We cannot liken these gold, cherry, and purple, these carmine, amber, brown, orange, and crimson shades, to the hues of the rainbow; those are too soft, ethereal, and fading; while our autumnal leaves glow vivid as the gay sparks which leap from the flaming forge in the dark night; and overhead arches an October sky of blue, so deep, and clear, as sharpens the contrast. Incarnated, as of old, in the burning bush, a mysterious presence seems to pervade every leaf with the radiance of "consuming fire." It is delightful to watch the trees when first they give token of their brilliant decay. Amid a mass of green, a little branch, foreshadowing, with prophetic ray, the coming resplendence, will suddenly blush into

the shades of the rose, and look like a gorgeous blossom; then here and there over the landscape, the scarlet death banners wave and blend with the still perfect emerald tints. At last, every tree, every shrub, the leaves of the creepers, the grape vines, the more delicate climbers, the rose leaves, and moss lichens on the rocks, assume the same enchanting guise, and mantle the whole woodland with a vesture of untold brightness.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A B S E N C E.

“CALL no man happy until he is in his grave,” were the words, once Solon’s, which Aubrey often repeated in the days of his first estrangement from her whom he loved.

These words of the ancient heathen philosopher were appended to a grotesque engraving which had been found among the hordes of a print-seller in Munich’s quaint town, when Aubrey amateured art. It was divided into two sections, the first represented the figure of a half-starved old man, borne in ~~equallid~~ raiment to a gloomy grave, where deadly nightshade, wolf’s-bane, and other poisonous plants, grew in a rank, tangled mass.

The second depicted the same grave, but lo! in the centre appeared a large lily, from whose pure chalice the spirit was rising in the form of a youth of transcendent look and uplifted eye, that hungered to taste, the joys of heaven.

But what availed it if Aubrey only testified to the truth of the philosopher’s experience, since he was neither content that the reminiscences of his love should rest, nor that the future should remain in a repose which is like death. No, even the beautiful face of the angelic youth, as portrayed in the picture, only seemed to remind him of her’s.

Anxious to escape the celebration of his sister's nuptials, he listened to the cogent arguments which the old steward set forth, that he should visit some of his estates.

A smile of misanthropic bitterness crossed his face as he asked himself what efficacy to banish remembrance there lay in the contemplation of bonds and mortgages and broad farm lands. Agitated by this mysterious sympathy for her whose presence was debarred him, he left his home, accompanied by an anathema from his mother, denouncing him for his unbrotherly conduct, in not officiating as groomsman and master of ceremonies on the coming eventful occasion. He travelled through Vermont and New Hampshire. Leaving the railroads he pursued his way chiefly on horseback. His path lay along the edge of the primeval forest, portions of which are there yet standing even to this day, as intact from the hand of the wood-chopper as when its dense mass first broke upon the cool Puritan eye. A quiet, pensive enjoyment took possession of Aubrey as he skirted the carmine-tinted borders of the great forest, whose leaves nodded at his approach then stirred like a galaxy of trembling jewels, wandering down in the breezless air, clustering upon his neck in flakes of garnet and gold, like gifts from an enchanted land. This pomp of beauty culminates under a sky of sapphire, unfretted by a cloud, and with all this orchestral fulness of tones and colors—this coronation of the year—yet every one goes up and down the festal land and says the days are too pathetic, and overburdened with melancholy.

Out in the farming country the grain had been harvested, the wool sheared, the corn thrashed. Aubrey stopped to see the farmers beat out and winnow

the grain, and then bear it in bags to the mills. These latter were always picturesquely located on the jocund little streams that oftentimes found a deep ravine in which to hide their sparkling life; and then out again, and amid high rocks they would leap down some gorge into a broad basin.

The lower portion of these mills were serviceable to grind the grain; the upper was devoted to the carding machines. Here the wool, some of which is previously dyed of a darkish blue, is prepared for the winter's spinning. The genial faces of the New England farmers—acute with intelligence without the narrowness of the huckster—pleased him.

Something of the ruddiness of their red clover fields mingled with the russet brown of their cheeks, while honest content and cheerfulness beamed from the visage and curled about the pleasant smile. Aubrey envied their healthful happiness.

One day our traveller paused to obtain some water to slake his thirst. He paused at a neat-looking farmhouse. Long rows of tin pans, silver-clean and glistening in the sun, leaned against the picket fence. Marigolds, asters, and tall sun-flowers furnished the luscious store for the ingenious busy gatherer of sweets, whose hives occupied a conspicuous corner of the front yard. The only inmate of the house at this time was a middle-aged woman who was working butter and making it into little rolls. An air of great neatness—that blessed characteristic of the Yankee housewife—pervaded the comfortable house. Chairs, pails, and floors had been scoured and scrubbed with sand, until the perfume of cleanliness blessed the place.

The woman, in answer to his inquiries, gave him a

burnished tin cup, and pointed to a spring. Aubrey stepped out and found himself under a bower of handsome maples. Upon a log sat a youth of about nineteen, apparently. He was whittling and whistling with infinite satisfaction to himself.

“Will you tell me where the spring is?” inquired Aubrey.

“And if you would use your ears the water would tell you.”

Aubrey did use his ears and eyes too, for such a bright leaping water rill as came tripping down through a channel of moss in the hill-side he had never seen before. It was like a string of diamonds, and with a pleasant sound it tinkled on the rocks and gushed through a wooden spout. Aubrey smiled on this water sprite and thought of May.

“What are you making?” he inquired of the youth.

“Sap-buckets, and sap-spouts and sap-cradles,” he replied, emphatically. “I calculate you arn’t much of a farmer or you would have known before you asked.”

“I see these fine maples still bleed at the remembrance of their wrongs,” looking at a large wound in the tree nearest to him, “and this looks scanty of its foliage.”

“Mighty flighty,” laughed out the unsentimental youth. “P’raps you wouldn’t object to a little of this same sap after it has been pretty well biled and strung over the snow in the spring.”

Aubrey smiled.

“Was you ever at a sugar-bush biling, mister?”

“No, and if these trees were mine, I should not have the heart to spoil them so.”

“Oh! there’s a mighty precious lot of trees round

here. Nobody seems to set much store by them. I guess you'd just tap your trees like your neighbors if you had 'em."

"I say, mister," shouted the young man, calling after Aubrey as he was leaving, "Do you know anything about those prairies out west? This is mighty clean, pleasant work, but I've got a wonderful hankering for the west; and you'll not find this coon at this slim business, should you come this way another year. Pretty respectable sort of a nag that of yours; I guess he cost some. You didn't buy him around here, did you? Good day, mister," and Aubrey rode on.

Fragrant grew the air, laden with the breath of the pines and hemlocks, as the twilight began to fall. The deep silence of the hour was eloquent. The lofty trees stood up like obelisks in the uncertain light, half spectral by the gleams of the stars, which, as Aubrey looked up through the gloom of the wood-path, appeared wreathed on their tall tops.

Reader, do not think he travelled alone. I am sure he had a companion, though invisible to us; she wears a cherub's head and her name—a spring month will tell it you.

When Aubrey returned after an absence of some weeks, he found Craithorne Manor left to his sole occupancy. The great avenues were strewn with restless heaps of yellow leaves, sere and dead, yet giving forth a faint, acceptable odor. He felt a charm in the loneliness of the house. No jealous eye keeping look-out to dog his footsteps, no well-bred stare from his sister, to watch his every mood. Unawares, he grew more elastic in movement, more hopeful in thought.

The pensive decay of the flowers and trees, while it reminded him how short and fleeting was this mortal

life, swept the tenderest chords of his nature, and drove him, once again, to meet May. It was with a satisfaction inexpressible that his eyes rested upon the little brown rectory; from the windows of his library there was no veil of leaves to screen the picture now, and a thousand emotions sprang up and asserted their supremacy. The unknown, who stalked by the side of her whom he loved, was forgotten. His love was stronger than jealousy or doubt. He chose to meet her one afternoon, as May was planting the bulbs of the lilies of the valley, that they might bloom out in the next spring upon her father's grave. She heard a rustling step upon the grass, and looking up, saw Aubrey. A quick cry of delight attested her joy; then her color varied rapidly, and her eyes sank as she thought she had betrayed herself. But Aubrey took her hand, gazed into its rosy palm as if it were his book of fate; then drawing it gently through his arm, they sauntered slowly, step by step, on, to the breezy hill-top. This pleasure was so unexpected, that it was like ascending the Mount of Blessedness together.

They saw a thousand happy creatures sporting upon the earth, scarce noticed before. A squadron of golden butterflies—pretty psyches—winnowed the air with their silken wings; the grasshoppers curvetted in their path like attendant sprites. Autumn left, unspoiled, St. John's wort, golden rod, silver immortelles, and many a coraline bud to strew in their way. They rested upon a carpet of fallen leaves as the sun declined. The wind sighed plaintively through the stricken trees, murmuring of the transient duration of earthly joys; of death and of decay. The shadows fell long and lonely upon the quiet burial-ground. But *their unspoken sympathy* only deepened into infinite

tenderness as the minor strain wailed through the landscape. When they parted, it was with a mutual joy they beheld and pointed, each with a smile, to a modest star, that emerged from a bank of clouds and wrought beauty upon the pale sky. We all love to bask in good omens, and this, they intimated to each other, should stand as security for the future.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

DESOLATE.

CHRISTMAS season passed mournfully enough to Cathara, and mid January was over and left her still a prisoner ; her moods varying, but gradually prostrating her. A harp, which Carl had added to her stores, pleased her for awhile ; but oh ! such wild, sad notes let music never breathe again. The solitary, when baffled of change, simulates pleasures, but of all deep cravings that were stirred within Cathara, she implored, not content, for she was now deadened by apathy, but enthusiasm, that blaze of the faculties that wraps life in a flame, that unsheathes the celestial sword of the spirit, which turns every way, and which cherubim guard to keep the secret of life. Then colors would flow into delicate and dazzling shapes, or music tones be lured to harbor together in symphonious significance, like Beethoven's translation of the soul into sound. But favorable as imprisonment has been for composition to some mental reaches, it did not come to our poor little prisoner for the longing.

One night Cathara's light slumber was broken by the clock sounding in the hall, and striking out the midnight hour. The least noise caused her to tremble, and she awoke, shivering with a nameless terror. In vain she courted sleep again, it evaded every effort,

until a wretched nervousness drove her from her pillow. In her adjoining parlor the fire still glimmered low, and a feeble night-lamp flickered with half-spent ray. She wrapped her dressing-gown around her, encased her feet in the fur slippers which Carl had provided, and commenced slowly pacing from bed-room to parlor, and from thence to the captain's observation-room. She paused before the window and looked out upon the silent night, the distant sea, the sleeping world. It was an eve of intense cold, the sky a frosty blue, the moon hanging low in the transparent clearness of the ice silver ether; the wide range of stillest sea accumulating splendors upon splendors as its tides trembled under the mystic call of their sovereign ruler and queen. Coming, as she did, from the realm of dreams, in the hush of every earthly thought, she felt spell-bound with the dread grandeur of the picture. Far as the eye could reach she saw but one ship, which lay so becalmed, motionless, silent, upon the vast blue solitude of glassy waves, as not to retrieve the mind from thoughts of another world. Her eye lingered about this phantom sail, as the only point of earthly significance, when she was conscious of a stir and movement of small boats, putting out from the vessel, and now she could see the oars flash back the light, as, rapidly, they impelled their burden shoreward.

Her mind, led away by the inconceivable mysteries which the night scene awakened, at once came back to dwell in the senses, all eye and ear, for, nearer and nearer, until they landed at the wharf, at the foot of the old chateau, came the strange visitants.

With a breathless agitation she watched them disembark, which they did quietly, standing in a mass until the boats had moved off towards the ship. Then,

two by two, the dark shadows approached the house ; their heads are hooded, but the moon points her finger to the white cross on their breasts. They are monks. Their leader, a little in front, wears a stole, a long white, narrow scarf crossed over the breast ; step by step, solemn, measured, slow, there was an appearance of self-reliance in this banded monkhood, seeking their purposes when others slept, that was at least startling. They passed out of her sight, and left the earth void as before. The parted wave kept no count, revealed no trace. Should she lapse into fancy and call it a dream, an optical illusion ? No, for now by dint of listening at the door which opened near the stairway, she caught, by overwrought sense, the sound of a sullen tramp, tramp—an assurance that it was a reality. They had entered the large hall. Here was something new to think of, and yet the brain, unused to so much stimulus, refused to counsel with her longer, and she slept and did not awaken till later than the usual hour, and much more than ordinarily refreshed.

She was alive again ; the rallying faculties flew like soldiers to the ramparts. She felt the necessity of vigilance, confident that some change must await her monotonous existence. Life, too, was battling for supplies ; she was actually hungry ; her breakfast promised a new relish.

Cathara was not disappointed in her conviction. At eleven, Carl came in and informed her that she was to make ready to receive two visitors in the afternoon. His aspect had gained a grain of animation ; he was gone before Cathara could question him, had that been of the least avail.

She felt her soul rise within her as the hour approached. Even if peril lay in the encounter, that

might have its charm, in preference to the unspeakably sad and barren life she was beginning to feel. Impatient, she sat in readiness some time before the hour named arrived. She was dressed in a black silk robe, heavily trimmed with jet, with which the fire-light played fitfully; across her shoulders lay an India scarf of deep crimson hue, by which her paleness looked positively brilliant. The velvet tresses of her hair were turned away from the polished temples, now almost painfully transparent, but the oval face still preserved its rare beauty. It was exquisite. The small, delicate mouth was folded in melancholy sweetness, but the dark eyes gleamed ascendent over her aspect of exhaustion. As Carl pushed back the bolts Cathara rose and was standing to await the moment's issue; one arm rested upon the arch of the harp, as if to control her agitation, when a man and a woman entered of conventional garb and aspect. The former and younger was, evidently, the leader of the monkish band, judging from the stole which he wore. His brow was high, pale, and beautifully arched; his fervid eyes, large, burning, uplifted, were laden with the passion of the saintly enthusiast. His whole bearing beyond and aloof from the ordinary level of man or priesthood. His wan and hollow cheek, the haggard lines about the mouth, the eyes that had no sleep in them, bore witness of long vigils, that had subordinated and sublimated the flesh; for even his hand shone transparent as he raised it and signed a cross in the air, while he bent one knee before the pictured cruciform symbol.

“Lady,” he said, addressing Cathara, without the least shade of embarrassment, “Anselmo has written to us of your patience, your sweetness, your talents.

Unconsciously your own hand, guided by an inspiring power, has wrought out your future destiny. Child of earth, would you be a child of heaven? Shall this perishing dust strive with its maker? Oh! woe unto us, for the day goeth away, the shadows of the evening are stretched out;” his voice died away with a melancholy grace, a forgetful dreaminess, which told that his mind wandered off into the land of abstraction. The woman, who strongly resembled her companion, was of even more ghost-like pallor, habited in a pale gray garment, girdled with a chain of iron, sustaining a massive ebony crucifix and rosary, which she occasionally rattled with a feverish restlessness. A white linen coif concealed the brow and crossed under the chin, and but for the wild, vehement glances of her restless eyes, she might have passed for a resuscitated figure of one of the saints which we see laid out in gray marble effigy. It was evident to Cathara, looking upon this woman, that she was not one of those who had glorified God by a perfect submission to his will, but a martyr, rather, for conflict, fagot, and flame; one who would have upborne herself proudly through a crowd of deriding faces, and smiled contemptuously at their scoffs. The celestial look which graced her brother’s face was not visible upon her less refined features. Both impressed the startled girl as having passed the climax of rational enthusiasm, and, if not quite astray, that they were closely threading the borders of insanity.

Her blood stood still for a moment as she contemplated each with a calm, collected inspection. Her mind vacillated; should she succumb to this new misfortune which threatened her, and lie down in helpless

imbecility, or should she, with reason unclouded, lead them perchance to aid her to regain her liberty ?

The woman, impatient of the silence, sprang forward and, raising Cathara's mantle, screamed in a wild tone, " Will you die like a poor wretch, without the pale of the true church, excommunicated and under its ban ? "

" Peace, Ignacia," said the priest, drawing his sister away. " Do you not see how fragile she is ! Let us not drive her soul to heaven by noisy words ; she must have fasted long and prayed late to look so worn, for she is but young yet, and so fair ; who knows if she is not a saint who has come down to pluck away some thorns that daily pierce us and lead us both into Paradise. See, the dove which her fingers have painted, looks at us with a human eye."

" Oh ! Ambrose, it stirs its wings," said the woman, fixing on it an excited gaze.

" *Ad Dominum di gloria,*" chaunted the priest, with many genuflexions.

" Give us a sign, give us a sign, before we go," shrieked the woman, falling at Cathara's feet, and kissing her robe.

Cathara turned slowly, without uttering a word, and made a gesture that they should follow her. She led them into the room which faced the sea, she laid her hand upon the long tube of the telescope, while her arm pointed up to the cold blue arch of the sky.

" Sister, she looks into heaven. I, too, know the pathway of the stars. I accept the sign."

" When will you let us come and see the way you will take us to Paradise ? " said the sister.

" When the nights are moonless, and cloudless, and

still," assuming an oracular manner and mysterious tone.

"It is enough; we must not be importunate;" and he drew his sister reluctantly away.

"Carl must have been in waiting, for the bolts slid into their grooves just as usual," thought Cathara, half inclined to attempt to follow them out of her prison house.

While the desponding girl sits pondering this incident, until the fire light only wavers the darkness, and leaves her to feel more and more her isolation, with naught but the dreary companionship of the chafing surge vexing the shore with the heavy roll of the sea, or the fitful gusts of wind that shrieked about the tower, like the laugh of some malignant goblin, we will enlighten our readers still farther concerning her visitors.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

MONASTIC LIFE.

WHEN Anselmo, the priest, entered the household of Astonley in the guise of a servant, he looked no farther than to gain the secrets of the man whom he had been appointed by his order to watch. Astonley having dismissed his other servants, had bribed him with a very large sum to become the custodian of Cathara. Seeing that Astonley's absence was prolonged, other views took possession of his mind. He was, to the heart's core, a Jesuit; devoted to the interests of his order. It was his religion, his ambition, his normal sphere. Here was an opportunity to serve his church, to elevate himself, to convert a heretic, that must not be lost. Her great fortune must be made to run into the coffers of the Romish Hierarchy. He communicated to some members of his order in England, that he had in his possession an heiress; he desired that a man of persuasive eloquence, or some superior woman of their faith, should be secured to second his designs. The superior to whom his desires had been made known, had sent the delegation of monks whom we have seen arrive, in order, should this new power be obtained, that a college might be founded *out of this* wealth. Hence, those who came were

mostly men of culture, scholars, competent to instruct and attract by their attainments.

Father Ambrose, their leader, had been selected as an eloquent expounder, absorbed in his religious faith, who fulfilled prayers and penances without end. He chose his sister to accompany him. She had been brought up, from earliest childhood, within the walls of a convent. She knew no other home. It had proved an unnatural dispensation for her. It was difficult to level her fiery nature to the daily placidities of a nun's cloistered life. At one time, eager in the performance of her daily ritual of prayers and self-imposed penances, she saw beautiful transfigurations gleam out in the beatific heights to which she climbed; from thence she descended into a life inexpressibly flat, monotonous, and impious. If she had dared, she would have openly cursed priest, convent, and missal, as thoroughly as she abstained from prayers or penances. Gloomy and wretched in the extreme, for want of a proper, active sphere, the superabundant energy with which she had been endowed found no proper outlet, and left the mind rocking from one extreme to another, until reason stumbled, and the fine balance of the faculties was irretrievably lost, quite unknown to those about her, however; very few of whom were without some crotchet, the natural result of their dead lives.

To her brother, the isolated life had not proved quite so detrimental. He was studious, rather courted seclusion, and was of a more heavenly temper, of a devout and ardent piety. It was a pity that his spirit had beat so much about superstitious, half-miraculous interpositions, legends, wonders, and divine communications. *Uncontent with a healthful advance in a simple faith, he must needs always be expecting some special revela-*

tion, until he, too, was separated from a just perception of things, and wandered at times into an eminently chaotic frenzy; but the burthen of it was the glory and the joy of a life of self-forgetfulness, and a closer approximation to the lives of the saints; all of which was set forth in such sublime language as to draw a veil over the more incoherent portions of his sermons.

The month expired. Its remaining week, after the advent of her strange visitors, was stormy, and filled up with the bitter wails of the icy wind, sweeping the dreary white drifts across the black waves with the power of a Norwegian tempest. The solitude which reigned was dread as that which circles about those vast polar regions where winter dwells eternally. At night, the priests, unused to live where the vengeful wind, like an incarnate demon, rocked the tower and presaged destruction, rose often at night and betook themselves to their aves and paters. Fragmentary snatches of their chaunts ascended to Cathara's ear, in a dim, weird chorus, solemn and pathetic as a wail for the dead. A sense of insecurity agitated and wearied her. Would she ever know the blessed sense of perfect repose again? No monastery could have more effectually excluded her from the gentle amenities of life. She was almost glad to be relieved of herself, one evening, by the entrance of Father Ambrose and his sister again.

"St. Cecilia," said the woman, with a knowing look, her eyes flashing with an unnatural fire, pointing at the harp. She was, however, in a more genial mood than previously.

"Sing for us, Cecilia, sainted prophetess of song," said the holy father, kneeling by a large arm chair. *His uplifted eyes were fixed upon her, fervent, regard-*

ful, yet with an introverted glance, like one who sees double.

The woman smiled pleasantly, as she seated herself in the depths of an easy chair. It was very evident that she had an appreciation for the beautiful, for, as Cathara uncovered the harp, she cried, "Brother, it is a harp of gold. I doubt not but that she is an angel."

Cathara struck some chords in the minor key, at first, doubting what was the most fitting theme for her to choose. Then, as of old, her voice took up the burden of the prophecy in Handel's divine strain, "For unto us a child is born."

The feeling depicted upon the kindling faces of the kneeling monk and his not less excited sister, imparted its effect to the singer. As she bore aloft the soaring music, she could almost fancy that she was standing with that great assembly about the white throne, singing the new song.

The jubilant strain, to which she had been so long unused, now lifted her for a brief moment out of the land of darkness and shadows, into the better land of hope and living joy.

As soon as the last tone had ceased, the woman, ever restless, besought her to show them the pathway of the stars.

"Come, brother, come, St. Cecilia, there is no moon to-night."

Cathara was thankful enough when the priest, of his own accord, took a silk handkerchief from his breast, and began dusting with great nicety the various glasses as he drew in and out the tube of the telescope.

The night was still and clear, the stars in myriads tracked the heavens. A shooting meteor darted

athwart the horizon, and appeared to drown its shining wings in the sea.

Cathara pointed it out to the woman, who threw up her arms with a quick ecstasy, then turned and looked as father Anselmo bade her.

“The glass is directed towards Lyra,” he said, in his dreamy voice, “it must be your constellation, lady, for music hangs on its form; and further on to the south, gleams a satellite, white Vesta, a calm planet; and, higher up, the mystic seven—undimmed, as from creation’s dawn—the golden Pleiades; and a little to the east, stately Orion’s banded beauty. See, that is bright-eyed Capella, that leads on to the west.”

“Show me the polar star,” said the woman, vehemently.

Father Anselmo drew her to the window; she leaned out; like a dissolving jewel, it glittered with its diamond-like point, true to the north.

“Bright star, monarch of midnight, guide me; up to thee I soar,” and her tremulous voice repeated the words over and over like an incantation, until Cathara was alarmed, and she began to conjure her brain for some pretext that should induce her guests to take leave, when the man spoke.

“Sister, let us not stay till the morning star alone is visible; it will drink up our life to keep these weary vigils,” passing his hand over his wan brow.

“Sleep, sleep. Oh! rest for the weary soul,” sighed the woman as her brother, who was gentleness itself, led her out.

A few nights after, Cathara lay awake, wishing for the morning to dawn. With her hands crossed upon her heart, she supplicated and prayed that “God would show his pity upon all prisoners and captives,

and graciously hear her cry for deliverance ; " when a sound curdled her blood. It was a long, low, continuous peal of hysterick laughter, and a rattling clamor of crucifix, rosary, and iron chain, dragged with a good deal of force and slung against the parlor door. Cathara sprang up, trembling, and put on her dressing-gown and slippers. Before she could illumine the extinguished lamp, all the while encouraging herself with the idea that the door was strong, the taper dropped from her affrighted hand. The woman was trying to unlock the door ; already she had pushed away the upper and lower bolts. The horror-stricken girl looked about in vain for some heavy piece of furniture to stay her progress ; she heard the key turn in the door, as with a burst it was flung open, but with instant cunning as quickly shut. Cathara had just time to interpose the form of the harp between her invader and herself.

" Ah ! there you are, out of your bed like a heathen and unbeliever. Don't you know that all Christian folks are asleep at this hour ? Witch, saint, ghost, which, speak ? "

" Shall I sing for you ? " asked Cathara, half dead with terror.

" Yes, if you can lay the devil, as David did, when he strung the harp for Saul. But don't give us any of the songs of Zion. I have had enough of those in my day—give us a merry roundelay, such as I read of once in a stolen book. Stolen waters are sweet, are they not, you malicious spirit ? " keeping her glance fixed upon her with the watchful, deadly eye of a tiger, as she smothered for a moment the contradictory turmoil of wild elements within her poor frenzied brain.

Cathara dared not refuse, although so incongruous was the effort, while her limbs quaked, and her tongue clave to the roof of her mouth with terror. She hesitated :

“Are you clean crazed pursing up your mouth in that odd fashion, like a cat? Quick with your purring, or I will show you that I am a cat too. Did you hear my satin leggins as I came along,” rattling her chain ; and she laughed a long shrill hollow shriek of empty, mocking mirth.

“Off then at last. See my grissly, griffin locks,” she screamed, tearing her coif from her brow in an instant, and throwing it at Cathara, and she spread out her hair, that fell long and gray, quite below her knees. “I tell you, girl, a fire wanders about my brain. Say, sing,” she said in a gentler tone, as she played with her hair.

Cathara sang a little song that told how merrily a mill-stream whirled a wheel, and sang all the day of nature smiling and blithe with carolling birds ; each verse ending,

“Ah! well a day,
Lovely, lovely May.”

The refrain declined into silence.

The nun’s mood had changed. In a mournful tone she sighed,

“When I die, I hope they will bury me where the daisies grow. I hope they won’t put me into that hateful stone crypt they showed me once, under ground in the chapel. Oh! heaven, I should burst the door, it would press so heavily upon my poor brain. It tightens so, I cannot breathe now; would they press me down without a warning?” Then suddenly elevating

her voice, she hurled anathemas upon the terror-stricken girl, with terrific vehemence of madness, cursing her for an infidel, an apostate, a monster, a fiend. Cathara stood with a pale, unflinching face, her head slightly bent, her arms folded, not daring and having no power to utter a sound lest the woman would crush her with the avalanche of her fury. Perhaps it was through the young girl's calmness, that once more she was off on another tack.

"Hist," she spoke in a whisper, as some sound attracted her attention, rising, "it will soon be day-break. Witches and bedlamites always take themselves off before cock-crowing, ha! ha! Remember it is not the cowl that makes the friar," and she moved off with her trailing chain, shut the door, bolted and locked it as circumspectly as Carl himself could have done.

Cathara sat down completely exhausted, and wept bitterly. She felt so miserable as to believe herself quite inconsolable. All that she had lost rushed over her mind. Drearily she sank down, feeling benumbed, cold, friendless, forsaken of God and man, immolated, forgotten, longing to die, only praying that she might die tranquilly. Bitter, objectless, hopeless, desolate as was that hour, every sense revolted at the thought of a violent death. There was something humiliating and awful in the contemplation from which her whole nature recoiled. "Not that, not that," she said; "oh! spare me that blight, the ghastliness and horror of such a doom, I cannot submit passively." Tears rained down upon her bosom unheeded, until the morning's light entered gray and dismal.

CHAPTER XXXV.

REVENGE.

EVEN in Paris, gay, fascinating, bewildering Paris, where courtesy is bred into the marrow of the bones, and manners are elevated to the dignity of one of the fine arts, Norman Astonley's grace and surpassing beauty of person attracted admiration. To this he chose to add an air of mystery that greatly enhanced the enthusiasm of the romantic Parisians, while the elegance of his apartments, his faultless equipage and *recherche* entertainments, combined to lend a *prestige* to his name.

He had the run of the fashionable saloons, the regard of many a high-born lady. His flirtations were numerous, although fastidiously selected, with the cognizant judgment of a *connoisseur*. The air of melancholy and languor which sat so well upon him gave rise to a thousand speculations. All sorts of high-flown fables were in circulation as to his enormous wealth.

From the poise of his superb head to the arch of his handsome foot, the lines were pronounced to be imperially elegant.

The homage of the discerning Parisians is acceptable. He sometimes allows himself to be admired for a few fleeting moments; as he pauses in his morning drive the valet leaps from his high box to execute some

commission, and the beauty-loving *Parisienne* lingers and sighs to find realized, for a moment, her *beau ideal* whom she, perchance, may never look upon again. Poor child, life is full of delusions; you inhale the breath of the Upas tree.

A slight movement of his faultlessly-gloved hands stirs the well-trained horses, and with quick, even step, the spirited creatures arch their necks and lay their well-trained hoofs close to the road and accomplish the distances like magic.

If ministering to every appetite, at whatsoever cost, gratifying every idle whim, receiving any amount of favor and adulation, can be called happiness, he had compassed the entire circle of these joys.

Intemperance has never flushed the pure coloring of his cheek; his health is without a flaw. Basking in the sunshine of high life, courted, envied, admired, aye loved by some whose affections he has thought worth the winning to beguile indolent hours; is he happy? Not all these dazzling surroundings can conceal from himself the weary weight that hangs, at times, like death upon his soul. When he approaches the tall mirrors that deck his elegant drawing-rooms, he sees looking out from that smooth surface a form, almost god-like in its beauty, but oh! horror, he sees—is it a delusion?—a cloud, a vapor, a wraith, a spirit like himself, but deformed, abhorrent. It has gone. The first time he caught this glimpse of his very self was one night, after returning late from gambling, for which his passion had now become unslakeable. He had lured a young Englishman to go with him to a gambling resort. In a few nights he had shipwrecked his fortune. *Despair* had driven him to suicide, leaving two young sisters, dependent and penniless.

Astonley and his companions designated him as a "sick fool," not worth grieving over. A certain moderation of temperament gave Astonley an advantage when the excitement of play ran high ; so that he was esteemed a fortunate man, and many a bet was laid upon him as a man of luck, predestined to win, and many an envious look rested upon the piles of gold he drew towards him and swept off with an air of non-chalance.

He would have bartered all that gold to have stopped the voice of an unseen comrade that always sought his company in a quiet hour.

"Curse on thee for thy whims and complaints."

"Oh ! give me back my innocent, peaceful days. Once, God spake unto me as a child, and my prayer went up to Him. Then how joyous seemed the heavens ! How fair smiled the earth ! It was beautiful to live."

"Out on thee, thou mocking demon ; thou shalt not torment me thus."

"Now, how empty and desolate," mourned the voice, "is your life, how wrecked and lost to all sweetness ! Come back ! come back ! I implore you to return ! The precipice to which you hasten, these idle pleasures cannot hide from me ; and oh ! the abyss beyond ! It is your mother's voice that cries to you ; her warning, pleading voice ; her soul calls to you from heaven."

Then Astonley cursed, with impotent rage, until the voice fled away, and he was once more rid of its wearisome importunity.

Lulu Lee was one of the gay crowd who came to Paris during this autumn and winter. Her rare beauty, *consummate* perfection of toilette, unshaken self-re-

liance, the indescribable ease and grace with which she danced and flirted, and her brilliant spirits, caused her to appear among the brightest constellations, as a star of the first magnitude. Astonley, by a natural attraction, also, was wheeled into the concentric circles that revolved about her glittering disc. Lulu intuitively recognized her counterpart in him.

Their beauty was of a similar type. Both were handsome, proud, wayward, reckless. They amused each other. They laughed at each other's deceptions. They fathomed each other's plots. Lulu became a constant resort for Astonley, when weary or too indifferent to enact a part, and play the agreeable. He could fly to her, to relieve him of the mocking presence of the demons who haunted him.

At least, she was queen in her realm, and could lay the uneasy spirits for awhile.

Lulu still cherished the dark mood, which closed her parting with Aubrey Craithorne. He had declined to give her his heart as remuneration for the spasmodic efforts she had made, to change the false, hollow, showy life she led, into something better. It was an irreparable wrong. The evil spirit which she temporarily ejected, came back and tyrannized with tenfold security. Oh! if she could but find the tenderest nerve of this apathetic man's affections, and wound its dearest sensibility, how sweet would be her revenge. Over this scene of quiver, recoil, and jar of suffering, Lulu enjoyed a delicious triumph in imagination. To see him grovel at the feet of the woman he loved as

- she had once, with vain supplications, at his; to see him deprived of the woman that he loved through her machinations, furnished her with a text for copious *musings*.

Who, looking upon this handsome, brilliant, fashionable cynosure of a gay circle, fair structure of womanhood, so beautifully frescoed by nature, could imagine the unsightly bird of prey, the vulture, that lived within this domain, whose beak the tenant daily whets for the hour that shall come, when it should pick out and banquet upon a human heart.

When their intimacy simulated friendship, Lulu Lee confided her secret hatred for Aubrey Craithorne, to Astonley.

“Craithorne!” exclaimed the latter, “there, I am even with you; at least I owe him a grudge that has never been settled between us. Although younger than I, he won a prize from me that should have been mine, at a university in Germany, and then, Methodist that he was, would not to save me from being expelled, stand by a white lie. You will find me a ready abetter there, Lulu.”

“I am told,” Lulu continued, “that May Temple is the apple of his eye; that he is positively insane about that little soft piece of simplicity. She is the daughter of a widow, who lives in a miserable little low brown house not far from Craithorne Manor.”

What was it that plucked at Astonley’s heart, like the bursting of an artery? Did he remember the hour when she was the light of *his* eyes, or had the cold waters of oblivion washed out the remembrance? Regaining his composure in a moment, he leaned over towards his companion.

“In a few days I must go to New York on business. If you will consent to a marriage with me, Lulu, I will pay my addresses and fascinate the girl away from him; how would that suit you?”

“Well, indeed, but you cannot expect to be re-

warded with this hand,” looking at the priceless gems which adorned it, complacently, “until after you have won her away.”

“Then what have I to stimulate me?”

“My promise.”

“I would not trust you.” Lulu laughed out a mocking, silvery laugh, and fixed her eyes upon him with a look that might have secured any amount of faith out of some of her worshippers.

Astonley raised the jewelled hand to his lips, “You might consent to a marriage, Lulu.”

Astonley laughed in his sleeve, as he thought he was getting rather deep in that department.

“Yes, a secret marriage, not to be divulged until you wish it, Lulu. That is fair, I am sure,” he added, with a trenchant glance.

“You think you have only to present yourself, and lo! the conquest is secured,” said Lulu, laughing.

“The greatest proof of that,” said Astonley, slyly, “is, that you who are surrounded by such a brigade of adorers, prefer me to the entire battalion.”

“*Prenez garde, Monsieur*, I only take you as a dernier resort, to accomplish a purpose; in proof of which—”

“*Tres bien*, lady fair,” replied Astonley, who felt that her destiny was a good deal in his own hands; “you are too well skilled in the politics of love, not to leave a great deal yet to be sought for. *Par bleu!* I lose all interest as soon as I have been accepted.”

“So I thought,” said Lulu, carelessly, with a little air that said, “I will take care of that.”

“But you, Lulu, have a perpetual charm for me. *The only woman of whom I do not weary; therefore it is, I long to have some hold upon you. You have*

become indispensable to my happiness, or how could I barter my liberty for chains?"

"You shall be well rewarded if you accomplish the estrangement of the two; and if you have to bring her to England?"

"Why, I can manage that," said he, with a sarcastic smile.

Lulu shrugged her shoulders. "Villain," she muttered, as he closed the door. In the depth of their hearts, each regarded the other as an enemy, over whom an ascendancy must be obtained.

Such is the friendship of the false. It is like a Psalm that a parrot learns to speak. It means a semblance of kindness, but hatred bursts forth at the least crossing or conflict of wishes.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

DREAM.

At Graston, winter reigned. The roads were blockaded with heavy snows. Fences were hidden, boundary lines effaced, well-known landmarks entombed. For many days the howling blast had driven great sheets of snow and hail and sleet against the windows of Craithorne Manor, and wildly had it striven with the great elm tree, until it bowed its branches more lowly than ever over the modest brown Rectory. At length the conflicting powers were hushed by a host of descending feathered allies that stole upon the scene, serene and silent as a marble sleep, building up a fortification of snowy emblems to an unusual height. Then the clouds parted and revealed a spacious, heavenly blue vested dome. Winter, secure of her fastnesses, her icy crown, and frost bejewelled sceptre, grew silent, reserved, bitterly cold, and rejected the courting sun with frigid disdain.

Every one knows how doubly dear this inclement season renders the comfortable home. Then, the pleasures of the fireside, its warmth, and its delightful security, are enhanced to the verge of enchantment. So it was to Mrs. Temple and May—who had great proneness and capacity for happiness—as this cold day

was closing in. The latter had just completed a chapter of autumn leaves, which she had been arranging in a border about the west window. As the last beam of the going sun departed, it lingered upon this gorgeous lacing, this reminiscence of autumn's beauty, and fanned the dying leaves into rosy embers.

What an expression of delight and gratitude was transmitted from mother and daughter, as the torch of the great alchymist bestowed this kindling glance.

Then May brought a basket full of mosses which she had collected in summer time, and spread them out to show to her mother, one by one.

"How delicate, how rare are these pale hues, and ethereal forms. They seem to contain the essence of some fine art. Little strangers, little poets, they appeal to us in a wraith-like form that I do not understand. And what painter's brush ever got leagued to tints like these? Here is dark green gray, cream-color, sere green, hoary like silver, violet blue. Your collection is the very prettiest ever wood nymph gathered," and Mrs. Temple held them up carefully in her transparent fingers.

"Oh! but here is something, mother, that you have not seen, a mimic forest, each twig finer than a cambric needle, each hooded with a little scarlet cap like a cardinal's. I found these nestling in little sunny hollows of the rock. And here is a tissue of soft gray emerald, spun like Brussels lace. What culprit Faun has been set to the loom to weave out a dress for his *mignon queen*?"

"Put them away now, May. It is too dark for you to see to arrange these fragile structures by the flickering fire-light, and to-morrow you can fasten them to the wooden cross."

Complying at once, May rose, speaking in her sweet voice,

“And will you please to sit still in your warm chair by the fire, while I draw the curtains to exclude the draughts? Is it not snug now? And now you are to remain quietly with this goodly company” (glancing at the Rector, dreamily looking down upon her, and almost moving in his frame with the play of the doubtful flame; to Walter Craithorne’s proud dark face; to the Bayard’s chivalrous bearing) “while I serve tea for you upon the little round table at your side.”

She left her mother in a state of happy introspection. Reader, despise not quiet happiness that comes in minute grains like manna. Because you cannot have ingots and bars of gold, do not reject and call it tame. The latter is as rare to find in the social as in the material world. But small blessings are poured upon us daily as the “angels’ food” which lay all about the camp of the despising Israelites.

May will not permit Deborah to help her. She returns now all animation, her curls falling in sunny rings about her fair face and throat. How prettily the folds of her azure-colored cashmere cling about her graceful figure. In the delight of making tea for her mother, she has forgotten to sigh over the past. She is intent upon making her mother *so happy*.

“I will light these four waxen vestals in honor of the occasion; they shall burn ‘scentless as moonlight,’ which is better than incense with tea, mother.” And it is pleasant to hear her laugh and see her twist the little paper lighter in her taper fingers; pleasant to watch her lovely blue eyes, and wistful glance, as *they* kindle at the flame. And a pretty sight it is to see her as she pours the tea into the tiny cups and

waits upon her mother, who enjoys it all with infinite relish, dropping a commendatory phrase, and pronouncing it all "so good."

That is over, the last crumb has been carefully brushed away, two of the wax lights set upon the table, together with the Bible and Prayer-book ; and a cushion is placed in the large chair at her mother's head.

"Please, mother, try and sleep a little, for the winter evenings are long for you to sit up—I will soon return."

She leaves her, goes up to her own room, parts the white dimity fringed curtains from the window, and looks out. All is like a sanctuary, a stainless outer court of heaven, lighted with saintly tapers. The moon is raining ghostly silver upon the porch, the crossing branches of the trees ; every shrub and stem is set with thick foliage of splintered icicles, that glitter like crushed stars. Her heart beats more rapidly, the night is so fine that it may tempt some one to come ; and one of those immature longings and nameless hopes, which are priceless to a maiden's heart, flew out of her chamber, and that which hath wings must have told of the matter, or how was it : but I must on with the burthen of my story. She stands before her mirror and smooths the beautiful clustering curls that shed down their spirals light as thistle down, she breaks from the monthly rose its last remaining bud, and hides it in the brown meshes. Dream-light and star-light are in her eyes, as a half presentiment or faith or luring forethought causes her to tread the stairs unconsciously with the air of one listening to catch distant music. She enters the room noiselessly, *her mother is asleep*. She stops and regards her with

lingering fondness and with admiration. She believes her to be not only the best but the prettiest-looking mother in the world. Mrs. Temple is carefully attired in her usual dress of black silk, free from a single speck of dust; a cap of transparent *tulle* partly covers the smooth hair; bands of silver streak it visibly. A slight hectic flushes her delicate thin cheek. As she opens her large dark eyes, they rest, with a tender, melancholy languor, upon her daughter. May draws a low seat close to her. Her mother smiled. The bud which May had plucked, now in the warmer atmosphere of the library, unfurled each rosy petal and exhaled its breath.

“Emblematic, I hope, of the roses that shall bloom in your path, for this is a thornless rose,” and her mother kissed her and inhaled the odor of the flower.

“Was it the rose that made you smile?”

“Yes, little one. Now will you read the lesson for the day?”

After the reading was ended, Mrs. Temple repeated,

“And as we have borne the image of the earthly, so shall we also bear the image of the heavenly. The germ of our heaven we mould out of our spirit while on earth. Therefore, quiet and unnoticed as pass our lives day by day, they have a sublimity, for any hour may usher us into the spirit-world; my child remember this, and let no blight canker the germ. There are moments, May, when I feel in close proximity to the better home. Swifter than a weaver’s shuttle pass our days away. Our hold upon life is frail and uncertain as the fading leaf; but by faith we can rise over fear and death, until the thought that we are drawing near to our last hour, becomes exceedingly triumphant

and beautiful." Mrs. Temple raised her eyes, as if in holy contemplation. The silence remained unbroken. Only the heart of the great oak log in the broad chimney sighed, as the fire-flames wreathed about it.

"Hist! some one cometh." The color flies to May's cheek, until it is deeper than the hue of the rose she wears. That is not Aubrey's knock. The color ebbs again. Old Mr. Somerton enters. His presence is welcome and genial. As he sits in the vivid fire-light, opposite to Mrs. Temple, his hair shines like hoar frost. His face is placid with the most subdued and gentle expression, and all the more touching because the lines that cross at sharp angles about the mouth indicate past internal conflicts, and battles with a strong, stormy nature. But peace floats like a banner over the forehead of the venerable warrior, and "good will toward men" brightens his faded eyes.

May forgets to listen to their discourse, and as she bends over her light needle-work she still dreams of one, the sight of whose merest outline is music to her heart;—when another footfall, light, rapid, imperious, grinds the snow in the path. Whose can that be but his? The door is flung quickly open, and Aubrey Craithorne enters. There is a regality in his haughty bearing, which renders the gentleness with which he clasps May's soft hand in his brown sinewy fingers, all the more alluring. He has nursed his ire for a long period of weeks, but now that he comes it is of his own accord, with his whole heart, and that heart upon his lips. But words cannot always be spoken, his eyes therefore drop a thousand eloquent periods upon the fair, exquisitely fair girl who welcomes him. May pales under his ardent, penetrating, admiring look, *which calls her from the two by the fireside, to stand*

with him under the autumnal garland, which attracts his eye.

“Is this some of your graceful work, my May?” he whispers inaudibly to all but her, as he stealthily kisses her hand.

The young girl blushed as she turned away the wealth of her curls to listen to a sound.

“Some one cometh,” she murmured, just audibly, to Aubrey.

“No,” he replies. “It is but the falling icicles dropping upon the crusted snow.”

Oh! May, some one cometh! Dost thou not hear the rustling of those lustrous wings that cleave the lucid moonlight? The face is purer than snow, the ethereal pinions droop like a cloud against the cerulean heavens. Is it an angel that parts the air and hovers near?

A sharp, decisive stroke upon the door, rings through the house. A strange, subtle, unaccountable fear sped with a quick anguish over May, setting an awful pallor upon her cheek. Mechanically she leaves Aubrey, and approaches the door as if to stay the dread moment. A fallen archangel might have appeared as Norman Astonley did at this moment—so dazzling and triumphant as he was in his extraordinary beauty, so attractive in every graceful movement, so happy to bring blight, horror, and despair to this peaceful fireside, as, with confident, smiling aspect, and easy elastic step, he bows to all, then presses close to May, who, with bloodless lips, stands like one turned to stone and riveted to the floor; he throws his arm about her draws her forward ere she is aware.

“My wife; let me present you all to my wife. We were married three years since. Come in, sir;” tura-

ing to a clergyman in a black gown and surplice ;
“ come in, and testify to our identity, if you please.”

Overcome by an unspeakable agony, May’s head sank low upon her breast, the room swam round, the lights vanished, and, half unconscious, she lay like a broken lily upon the arm of Astonley.

“ Impossible ! Oh tell me what all this means. Are you married to this man ? ” said Mrs. Temple, rising quickly and clasping her daughter vehemently away from Astonley. “ Oh ! I was wrong, wrong even to ask you. Speak, May, May. Is it true ? ”

Every faculty quivered with consciousness, as May heard the anguish which chilled her mother’s trembling voice.

“ Yes, mother, it is true ! forgive, oh ! forgive me ! ”

A smothered repressed sound of suffering gurgled from her mother’s lips, as she sank low to the floor.

“ I believe I am dying. I have nothing to forgive, sweet child ; I bless you, bless you ; remember, there is nothing to forgive,” and her voice died away forever on earth. The silver thread that bound her fragile life was snapped. The eye grew dim and sealed in darkness ; the pale waiting Angel of Death entered, and bore away the departing spirit.

With a cry, prolonged and fearful to hear, May flung herself by the side of her death-stricken mother. Awed, the minister withdrew, followed by Astonley, who, stunned at the unexpected issue of his fine plans, skulked irresolutely away.

Aubrey instantly sought Mrs. Temple’s pulse, and saw that restoratives were useless.

Old Deborah came in, wringing her hands, and with wild sobs and groans bore her mistress to her silent *chamber*.

Aubrey's quivering lips, dilated nostrils, fixed, stern look, as he stood over the prostrate girl, indicated the tempest of love, rage, and despair which convulsed him. At length he raised May, and laid her upon the lounge.

"It is but a momentary lull of the faculties," he said, turning to Mr. Somerton, who sat paralyzed with horror. "It is a mercy to let her remain unconscious until nature rallies. Oh! ill-fated girl," he said, bitterly. "The rose, in mockery, still clings to her hair. This was her secret—you need not tell her that she has broken my heart. Will you stay with her until she awakens? I cannot." And striding away with a fixed gloom upon his dark face, he walked to his lonely house with his bitter sorrow.

With a long, shuddering sigh of consciousness, May came back to life and grief.

"Did I not kill her?" said May, in a low, dry voice, looking piteously up into the aged face.

"No, May. Her physician who has just left us, said the end had been drawing nigh, rapidly, of late."

"But I hastened its close, and she died in an effort to save and console me."

This was said in a voice so despairing, as to touch her companion with the deepest pity for her.

"Submit, my child, submit. It is all of God's ordering. His Providence overrules all things for our good, if we submit to the chastening hand. Death, dear child, is our lot; sooner or later, it comes to all. Let us rejoice if it be as speedy and painless a translation of spirit to the Father of spirits, as hers."

And kneeling, he prayed and wrestled with God for a blessing for her.

"Mother, mother, would to God I had died, and

could be buried in the same grave with you ! ” and this she repeated over and over, refusing to be consoled. But we will not dwell upon that which cannot be described in words. The first agony of bereavement,—the desolation ; the utter hopelessness in looking into the future ; the melancholy recurrence to the thought, that the dreary affliction is only an appalling dream, that it cannot be a reality ; the strange alien aspect of all outward things ; the sun mocking her sharp sorrow with its gilded, garish beam. Something like a heavy bolt appeared to have struck and left her immovable and helpless under a weight of intense and intolerable misery. Many days had intervened since the last sad services and funereal rites were over, and May still remained prostrated, tearless, hopeless. Old Deborah wept over her, chafing her hands, begging her to cry or talk, or any thing but to look so like one in a burial trance.

“ Here is a composing powder, darling—do take it.” As the poor girl shook her head, the old nurse burst forth into such loud lamentations, that May seized the cup mechanically and drained it.

“ Go away now, go away ; your weeping frets me. Why should we weep ? There is nothing to live for ; let us die.” And turning her face to the wall, she neither wept, nor spoke, nor moved.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

LINA.

UNSYMPATHIZING as was Carl's iron nature with the ordinary ills of life, there was a dignity and forbearance about his prisoner that taught him to respect and have faith in her. When, therefore, she complained to him of his cruelty in permitting the poor crazed nun to enter her room in the dread hours of the night, he apologized, and explained how she had possessed herself of his keys unawares, and promised that in future she should never again be thus molested.

He obtained the removal of the monk and his sister, and soon after the band, by order of the archbishop, were divided, and sent to New York and Boston. But Carl had no intention of allowing his prisoner to regain her liberty. A convert she must be; but, once more, Cathara had grown listless and apathetic; a still dull pain racked and unstrung her nerves. She had lost all appetite.

"Go, Lina," said the priest, addressing a young girl, "put on your very best attire, look cheerful and gay, and take this bowl of soup up to the lady's room, I will follow and open the door. If she is sick, nurse her; if sad, you must rouse her."

"but—" said Lina.

"Not a word, only go."

After his niece had donned her dress he followed her up stairs, opened the door, gave the girl a little emphatic gesture, and left her. Lina gently tapped upon the inner door. No answer came. She glided into Cathara's sleeping room ; so noiseless was her step the poor captive thought that it was her fancy that she heard a sound. She lay with her face buried upon the pillow, when a strange voice struck upon her ear. "Lady, please to look at me, you must take this broth." Cathara heard this sweet, girlish voice, with its pretty Italian accent, and turned quickly to look at the intruder. No gloomy vision was the bewitchingly gay, piquant little creature, who now stood by her bedside, imperiously commanding, nay, holding the spoon pertinaciously to her mouth, with savory-smelling soup. Cathara shook her head ; "One, one, just one," and unable to resist, she managed one swallow. Then rising, and leaning against the pillow, she took another survey of the *petite* figure, so gay in a scarlet cashmere petticoat and short black velvet jacket, open at the throat, a coral necklace setting off its smoothness, the short tight sleeve with gauntletted cuff, attracted attention to the well-turned arm and taper wrist. Her features were small and irregular, but so full of archness and good humor you could not forbear to admire the small sound teeth and brilliant smile, nor the little black glossy head on the back of which was perched the tiniest of scarlet velvet caps, fastened with two large gold pins.

"What is your name ?" Cathara inquired, pleased with the survey.

"Lina," replied the girl, in a voice like a warble, so mellow was its sprightly note. "But you must let me help you. Do you not think you could sit up in the

easy chair by the fire? I can dress hair so beautifully, and now let me dress you. Are these your slippers? What tiny things!" and she laughed a rich merry gurgle, like a bobolink, as she twirled the black satin slipper upon her finger.

There was the wealth of fifteen bright summers in this blithe voice, and it did more to enliven Cathara than food or medicine.

Lina wrapped the dressing-gown about her, and ere she was aware of her intention, Lina had raised her in her strong little arms and carried her to the chair. To be sure she was so fragile now as not to be much of a burthen, but she exclaimed,

"Oh! you should not have done that; it was too much of an effort, and will hurt you." Lina laughed, all the time dressing her.

"Oh! I am so glad that you are so pretty. I was afraid you would be ugly and frighten me; or old, and I would have to be so solemn; and it is gloomy enough in this old house, and I have not been here two days yet. But first, I must make you eat some more broth," and she proffered the spoon.

"No, no," said Cathara, almost smiling at the little tyrant.

"Then I cannot tell you any more stories or laugh. I shall grow gloomy, like this," and she tried to frown, but it was so ludicrous she had to set down the bowl to laugh. "One more;" Cathara took it.

"Oh! such beautiful hair," she cried, returning to brush and stroke the long velvet tresses.

"Where did you live before you came here, Lina?"

"In Florence; I learned English in the convent. Did you think I was English?"

"No, oh! no. Who brought you here?"

"*Mia madre* died a year ago, and Sister Agatha, that is my mother's sister, she is a Sister of Charity, was coming to this country, and as I was an orphan she did not like to leave me alone. Anselmo is her uncle, my great uncle, and she sent me here to stay awhile with him. I cried all day after I came here, it was so gloomy. Signorina, do you not think it is the gloomiest place in the world?"

"I have found it so."

"Then why are you here, sweet lady?"

"Never mind that now, Lina. Tell me where you went after your mother died."

"I went into the convent where Sister Agatha was. There the nuns taught me to embroider, to speak English, for they knew I was coming here, and to play a little upon the organ and harp. But I loved best to work in the pretty old garden, to set out flowers and weed the beds."

"Were the nuns kind to you?"

"Very kind; they petted me, and said I was so wild, they might as well try to teach a free bird not to fly as to make me still and sober. This is my holiday dress. Twice I have been to a festival and danced."

"And you love to dance, Lina?"

"Yes, out of doors, where the trees are dancing, and the clouds float along, and the wind blows your hair, and the music is just like wings to your feet, and the costumes look so fresh and pretty, all the blue ribbons fluttering."

"But your ribbons are not blue," said Cathara.

"Pedro's are blue."

"Ah! the mischief," said Cathara. "Who is Pedro?"
Lina gave vent to a succession of musical, gleeful

laughs, such as never sprang from any but the heart of an innocent child.

“Oh, Pedro! He was my lover, I suppose—he said so; but when he told me what great pain he suffered in having his heart ache so for me, I said good-by to your love then, I am happy now, I have no heart to ache for you.”

“Ah! that is better; you are a wise little Lina.”

“Not so wise but that I can cry for Italy,” said Lina. “If you do not have summer here soon I shall die. Is it ever summer here?”

“Yes, more beautiful summer you cannot find in the world; but first comes the spring.”

Lina’s airy feet bounded from the floor, as she murmured, “Flowers and birds and sweet air.”

“All that, but the sweet spring will break my heart if I am not free to enjoy it once more.” And the tears glistened like a mist upon her lashes, and she passed her hand with a weary grace over her pale forehead.

“Signorina,” whispered Lina, sinking on the floor at her feet, and looking up with an anxious air, “why are you here in this old lone house by the ocean?”

“Do you think you could be my little friend, or help me, if I confide in you, or would you rather serve your uncle?”

“He does not want me to do any thing but to make you happy. Hark! he calls me,” and she was flying towards the door.

“Stay, stay, or come back, do not leave me, Lina,” and she stretched out her hands with a sad, yet coaxing smile.

Lina kissed her dress, her hands, her feet, with a quick, bright impetuosity, then flew to the door.

In the afternoon she came in again and tempted

Cathara to eat, to smile, to walk a little about the room, she supporting her.

“Lina you are like spring, and spring will be here soon. This long dreary winter has been endless. Oh! help me, Lina.”

“I love you so; I did the moment I saw you, lady; I would die for you. You are so fair and gentle, and look so like a lovely saint,” answered the warm-hearted, impassioned young Italian.

In a few days Cathara had confided all her story to her, and Lina’s little head was filled with devices to aid her.

But, beside warnings enough upon that point from her uncle, the priest, he took such pains to watch her that she was almost as much of a prisoner as Cathara. She shrugged her little shoulders, pouted, and shook her fist at her absent uncle, as she confided this to Cathara, whom she grew not only to love, but almost worship. In return for her devotion, and under the influence of this fresh, healthful nature, its sport and bloom, Cathara’s health and spirits rallied daily.

Lina was, I fear, a sad heretic in her way; for when Father Anselmo (Carl) gave her good Catholic books to read for their mutual edification, her incessant yawns betokened how tiresome she found it to attempt converting Cathara in this manner; and, after a few efforts, the book would drop, and something more congenial would be substituted. This she read in the Italian, with her delicious voice subdued to the lowest key, lest the stealthy, watchful priest should overhear. She wore a little note which Cathara had written to be sent to her agent in Boston, asking his aid and protection, for weeks, and found no opportunity of leaving the old château, or of throwing it from the

window to some sailor. Her uncle watched her incessantly.

Weeks lagged on and brought no change to Cathara. Lina's most sedulous efforts to gain release for her had not been crowned with success. But with a keen pleasure, akin to bright hope, Cathara welcomed the brilliant April month, that had come laden with an unusual warmth and beauty. Pure and cloudless slept the far off cerulean arches of the heavens, as if dreaming of summer's ardent reign, her flowers, her emerald glory, the whole earth an Eden vested in richest balmy bloom. The azure sea drank in the gold-sprent rays that lay warm on her breast, agitating its vast waters like liquid chrysolite. Fringes of sunshine hung over the old ivy, germinating its knotted sinuous length into hundreds of dark, red buds.

Summer was coming, incarnate living poetry! Lustrous life! Summer, sandalled with blooming, dancing, singing hours.

Cathara had mounted the table that she might reach the only opening of the window which was free from fastenings. Here the mild air smote directly upon her cheek. Now she raised the glass upon which one arm had rested to take a more critical view. Her vision was arrested by a little sail-boat that was lightly skimming before the breeze, keeping quite near the shore. At first she regarded, with an indifferent eye, the insignificant looking sail-boat that traverses the seething ocean so securely, when suddenly her hands tighten nervously about the glass, her heart beats wildly, her eyes dilate, for she sees an apparition that stirs and burns every pulse of her flesh and spirit. It is Bayard who guides that shell over the waters. He fixes his eyes upon the old gray château.

Cathara calls Lina in such a piercing voice, that the Italian drops her embroidery and springs to her side. "Go, Lina, go, and stand in the lower balcony that opens out of the parlor, and wave your handkerchief, and attract, if possible, the attention of the young officer who guides the sail-boat near the shore." Father Anselmo had mounted guard as usual, by the great hall stove, and he sat by the door at the foot of the stairs that led to the tower. Wearied with *aves* and *pater nosters*, which he had numbered with an unusual diligence, the night previous, he slumbered. The sounding of the bell from Cathara's room roused him; he went up and unlocked the door. Lina dashed past, and, seeing the drawing-room door ajar and the windows open to let in a little of the warm air and April sun, she flew like a swallow to the balcony, and here she fluttered and waved her scarlet petticoat.

Half hidden by the frame-work, she appeared to Bayard like some gay tropical bird, airing its pinions upon the old gray balcony, and he wondered what it could be. He was half tempted to turn back, but he was unacquainted with the coast. The wind and tide, meanwhile, were bearing him every moment rapidly away. He had tacked about, and was bearing down towards New York Bay. When her uncle, the priest, reproved her, Lina said she only wanted to look out of the window. She wished she were a bird, that she might fly out and sing on every ship, and wave, and cloud.

Lina, the next day, whispered to Cathara: "He saw me, I am sure he must have seen me. He will come again, Lady, rest assured he will."

"We will hope so, Lina. It is a great pleasure to

have seen him, to know that he must be somewhere near us."

"Dearest Lady, I would not be presuming, is he a very dear friend?"

"I do not know that I have a friend on the face of the earth, save you, now, Lina. Once he was my friend; but long, long have been the days since that day."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

SUNDAY.

EVERY thing had turned out so adverse to his wishes, that Astonley had lost his relish for consummating his plans with regard to May. He had no fancy for encumbering himself with a crying, unhappy woman, even if she were willing to accompany him across the ocean, which it was very evident she would not be. In truth, he did not trouble himself much about her. He had grown reckless, and had vanished, no one knew whither. All the softer emotions of his nature were rapidly subsiding before that mighty passion—gambling—into whose boundless vortex he felt that he could have seen, with joy, the kingdoms of the whole earth and the glory thereof go down.

Two months had passed, in which, shunning all light and almost the blessed air of heaven, he had in vain tried to fathom this fathomless passion. All the day he gave to sleep, to resuscitate his powers for the evening campaign. He was as good as dead until the green table was spread and the dice rattled, and life, feverish, hideous, looked out of his eyes, and awaked to thirst for every precious, priceless thing. More than once had he seen the golden bowl of man's life offered up in despair and suicide to add to his gains. His luck had been so excessive, that his companions declared that he

was his Satanic Majesty, or in direct communication with him. But there came a short lull even to this consuming passion, and when he could banish the sense of degradation, the wild remorse which scathed him, the intolerably keen sword of conscience, which divided asunder the very joints and marrow of his perverted life, he enjoyed the splendor of his success; he was elated at his self-reliance, which had carried him off victor from many a perilous chance. There was something yet necessary for him to accomplish before self could be aggrandized to its highest and most alluring summit. Plotting and counter-plotting were his delight. He despised an inferior opponent. He despised an inferior woman. Companionless he could not enjoy his spoils. There was but one he deemed worthy to share all he could give. He resolved to make one final effort to obtain acceptance from her, when, if she consented, he would seek some pleasant corner of the globe, and spend the remnant of his days in goodness and domestic felicity. If she would not yield amicably, why, there might be something exciting in taking severer measures. At all events and hazards, Cathara must be his.

Buoyed up with this determination, absorbed in arranging his methods and schemes, he lost sight, for a brief while, of *Ennui's* parched and haggard visage, whose scourgings were like the ravages of the canker-worm, a mildew and blight, leaving his heart withered and arid as dust.

It was the noon tide of a warm, delicious Sabbath-day, when Norman Astonley strolled down to one of the wharves and secured a small craft with a mimic sail, manned by two sailors, who were well acquainted with the coast.

Pause, one moment, impatient mortal. Voyager, thou sailest upon an unknown sea this day.

His restless foot spurns and flies the earth. As he rocks lightly in the boat, resting upon the central seat, the handsome gambler looks about complacently. It is a familiar sea upon which he sails. He is acquainted with every inlet, indenture, rock, reef, shoal. There is security in that knowledge.

It is a summer-flowing sea. Those smooth waves pillow the bending heavens. He does not look up; but this day the heavens have come down to him. He sees them in the jasper waters. He sees them, but it is only the visual nerve they impress, with a vague, watery image. He also hears a melodious chime of Sabbath-bells, calling to prayer, and to praise. The sounds imbue the pure air, telling every creature to lift up the gates of their hearts and let the King of Glory enter,—that King, whose glory the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain, triumphant over Death and Hell. Such is the mighty music that rolls from the peal of those Sabbath-bells, bringing the promise of His advent to every human soul, high and low, bond and free. On, through the enraptured air, the seraphic message of love pursues its immortal song. Alas! our voyager's ear is not attuned to catch the burden of this melody; he only notices the tinkling brass and hollow cymbal. Astonley is not grateful for the fine weather and inspiring air, but he feels their influence. They raise his spirits. He enjoys a new sense of physical life. He mentally rehearses the eloquent sentences he intended to make use of, to touch Cathara's generosity, to induce her to believe and confide in him. Not one ray of pity entered into his selfish heart for the long weary *hours of isolated imprisonment he had inflicted upon*

her. All was self, self. Would not even *he* have turned away abhorrent if he could have fairly seen the image which his handsome clay enshrined? Over the sleeping sea, with the gently ebbing tide, gayly and fast the boat sped on until they were within a mile of the destined harbor. The breeze, which had but the merest wavering impulse, suddenly died away. The air began to grow heavy, hot, and still. The sun scorched and withered them with its flaming lustre as they lay becalmed; their sail hanging motionless, save where some whirling breath for a moment beat against it idly, presaging a storm. Dark shadows assembled themselves into a dense mass in the East—the thunder muttered in a hoarse undertone—a ball of fire rolled from the blackness and quenched itself in the waters. Astonley cursed the sailors because they had forgotten their oars. He was no coward, but to be in that frail shallop, at the mercy of high winds and waves, might have alarmed a bolder man than he. On swept the hovering black cloud. The boat heaved and sank upon the troubled ocean, then drove wildly on towards the shore. The rain came down in torrents; the wind blew sharp and fitful; the unsteady craft careened over, filled and sunk, almost unseen in the darkness. Fiercely the three men struggled with the roaring waters. The surf beat them about helplessly. It landed one of them high above the wharf at the foot of the old château. When the storm was ended—and it was but a gust—the air, purified and clear,—the sun sank into a pavillion of orange and proud purple, out of which he rained resplendence upon the vivid heaving waters. The foaming surf then played with a dark form, idly, as though it were a log—a mere waif, to and fro, backward and forward. The sea refused to keep her dead.

After the priest had resuscitated the stranded sailor, they walked to the shore, and drew out of the water the swollen remains of Norman Astonley.

The priest was horror struck, but kept his own counsel. With all due decorum and despatch, the sailor reconveyed the body to the city of New York. The calamity was published in all the papers. The remains were conveyed to a receiving-vault, subject to the orders of his friends. In a few days the incident was quite forgotten.

Old Mr. Somerton read an account of the wreck of a sail boat, in which Norman Astonley, an Englishman, had sailed, one Sabbath-day. His person and dress were minutely described. There was not the shadow of a doubt—May was free!

CHAPTER XXXIX.

WITHIN AND WITHOUT.

MAY's life in the lonely house was still, that stillness which rusts and corrodes the mainsprings of joy.

It is true she could wear the front of grief unmolested. There was no necessity for forcing unnatural smiles, or taxing her powers to amuse others with easy conversation. Silent and solitary meditation in hours of bereavement, has its use, its mournful satisfaction. There may be healing in the bitter cup—a new sweetness poured into life, a stronger upsoaring of spirit—a more earnest desire for heaven. Sorrow is better than joy when our tears weep away the films of earthly sight, and one can behold Love omnipotent reigning over all things.

Had the poor, stricken, motherless girl given herself up to a passionate abandonment of weeping, and bitter expressions of sorrow, then her old nurse would not have been so affected by her looks, so anxious for her.

Neither tears nor smiles were upon her face, although a dark purple shadow lay about her eyes, attesting her weary, sleepless nights. It would have been better for her to have felt her heart racked and quivering with bitter pain than that dull, senseless, immobility of spirit ;—alive, yet dead ; conscious, yet

dull; slow dropping anguish, that gradually petrifies the heart into stone. Neither was there any social usages, in her remote wintry life, to allure her from this sore expenditure of a wasting, bruised, and broken spirit.

Sunk in melancholy, May acquiesced in every suggestion which Deborah could make, with such a gentle compliance, that the faithful woman would far rather have seen some of the old remonstrance, the sparkling wilfulness; but no—she would sit for hours in a state of passive weakness, contemplating with a vague and dreary eye the bleak hill-slope, the dull green of its screen of pines, the gray neutral tints of the sky, from whence a thick drizzle of frozen rain half dimmed the windows with mist. Often she thought, half with envy, of Cathara's life—full of new scenes and enjoyments—in contrast with her own. Aubrey, attracted, in spite of his determination to keep aloof, to wander about the house at night, when unseen, had once, when the curtain had been drawn away, by the vivid fire-light, caught sight of her pale face and small, drooping head. The relaxed and mournful looking figure reminded him of those depicted upon some of the tomb stones in the church-yard, bending sadly over the lost and gone. Night after night he resolved to enter, night after night a power held him back. No matter how great was the total obscurity which hemmed his way, when nothing could be seen for the vast drifts which enshrouded earth and sky, with no warmth, no love, no tenderness, no genial glow to welcome him. Touched in the most secret core of his pride, the very evil which he had so greatly deprecated had come upon him; yet the ineffaceable passion which had gotten possession of him, mastered him so far as to compel him to

a certain extent, to watch over her whom he had lost. Often, oh ! how often, he felt tempted to sacrifice his honor, his unblemished reputation, which was as the apple of his eye, to taste once more the intoxication of being with her, of loving her ! How easy it seemed for him to enter the little brown house, (sometimes his hand did raise the knocker,) to take her in his arms, to console her, to bring her back to life and joy ! Why should he stand without, drenched with rain, or buried in snow, benumbed with cold and bitter disappointment, his pulses quivering, his flesh strained upon and shrinking, when he might annihilate suffering in an ecstacy of happiness ? For such mighty love as his he was sure would overmaster her belief in the tie which linked her. And with soul leaning to soul, faithful, fond, and true, could retribution overtake them ? Would it be just if it should ? He would be a law unto himself, he would uphold her purer than a lily in the sunlight. He could see the great skeleton tree which guarded the house, standing in sharp and gloomy outline above the snow-roofed Rectory. It seemed to hold a thousand moaning winds, that sobbed inarticulate, but dismal, as he approached to lift the latch.

There was something awesome in the impenetrable wail over nature's desolation ; the melancholy shiver of the leafless branches ; of the soul-sorrowing sounds, so like a spirit—a spirit that unsensualized the thoughts from earth-born dreams of earthly pleasure, that tyrannized over and dashed the rapture from his lips, that put questions to him hard to answer. Would it be manly ? Would it be high minded ? Would not his happiness be but a taste, if purchased at the price of self-respect ? Should he sell this birthright of *unstained character* which his fathers had bequeathed

him? Back came the answer of conscience, prompt and unerring. Pluck out your right eye, wrench off your right arm, sooner. And once more conscience crushed the wild beating purpose, as he lingered and hesitated, and sent him to retrace his path with a frozen heart, and with strange weird intimations assailing him and leaguing him to the visionary night. But dear and passionate longings came again, when the phantom craft of wind, and clouded stars, and beating snowflakes had vanished and left him once more to deal with a man chafing as a lion, assaulted with jealous doubts, with pride and moody determination, and all the fluctuations of his temper, upbraiding him with weakness and indecision of character. Ah! it was a woeful time with him!

Unconscious and undreaming of all this, grieved May, while good wrestled with evil on her very threshold; while nature was striving, with her thousand sublime voices, to help her; yet, it seemed to her that she was forgotten of man and forsaken of God.

When medicine and friends fail, then wait for God. Three months had passed. The house eaves began to spout and murmur with merry pat, pat, upon the dissolving snow—honey sweet, the congealed sap flowed anew through the veins of the maples—the sun-warmed air thrilled the sense with dreaming song and the bright opening verdure—when, one morning, old Deborah looked in upon her pale darling, almost as pale as the counterpane, upon which lay her open, listless hand. Deborah opens the window to let in the spell of spring. As she goes out, she hears a sound: she peeps through the crevice of the door. May is awaking. With a weary, unrefreshed look, she gathers the long ringlets in her hand. She turns to rise,

when a slight sound arrests her attention. She starts, leans upon her elbow, looks over her shoulder curiously. A bird, with plum-blue wings, has flown in, and stands on the ledge of the casement. The sun kisses his downy breast. How prettily he sidles along, a merry little hop or two—then hark! a low note, a delicious gurgle. Another hop—he warbles and sings. How his tiny heart quivers with the beauty of his happy life! Those wild free notes stir up a thousand blithesome recollections in May's heart of her cloudless, exultant childhood. The guileless, naive smile of a child, parts her curving lips, and turns to spring skies the azure orbs which gleam through her upraised lashes.

Ariel has flown. This winged creature of song loves not to keep his matins under roof. He flits out into the glow of the dawning glory, now momently brightening.

May knelt by the window, and looked eagerly out to see him soar.

“Come away, now, come away, my dear young lady, from the open window, until you are dressed,” said the watchful nurse, who wrapped a dressing gown about her, and led her to a chair. She began to brush out the flossy curls.

“Is it the Resurrection morning, nursie?” asked May, in a less hopeless voice than she had spoken of late.

“Why, yes, my lamb, if you think so,” wiping a tear from her eyes.

“Where everlasting spring abides,
And ever blooming flowers,”

She repeated.

"The bird came from that everlasting spring, I am sure. A messenger-bird, was he not, with 'healing in his wings?' It was not an accident, that he came to me, this morning. Do not say that it was an accident."

"Not a bit of an accident, any more than it was an accident about the dove winding an olive leaf round his bill, and bringing it in to Noah. Don't you mind that, little one?"

Deborah's faith was lively, and smacked of the visions and wrestlings that were stored up in some half dozen odd volumes that had fallen to her from a brother, who, long since dead, had once been an eminent exhorter or class leader. And she went on with animation—

"And I believe that was a message-bird to you, as much as the message-bird was to Noah."

"And what message do you think was sent to me?" May inquired, looking so wistfully up into Deborah's face.

"Why, lauk, Lady Bird, I am sure he said, 'The pleasant weather was coming, and you must take heart and enjoy it, and not fret your father and mother high in bliss up in heaven; but just ye hold on a little more cheery, and not try to get out of the world before your time.'"

A broken smile fluttered and trembled for an instant, then a laugh, low and vaguely sweet, like spontaneous music was heard from May's lips.

"Glory, glory," shouted Deborah. "Amen! We are out of the house of our bondage. My prayers and tears have found favor with the Lord," and she held out the dress for May to put on.

"Why you would not have me wear that pall,

now that I have come out of my grave. Take away the mourning, and bring me the cheerfulest dress you can find."

"See what a little bird can do," said the rejoicing nurse, returning with her blue cashmere on her arm.

"I will wear the blue, in honor of the blue bird," cried May, and a faint blush color strove against the pallor which had so long lingered upon her cheek, as she descended to the breakfast room, not without a good many tears either, and took her mother's seat at the table. At length, day by day, once more, in place of stagnating, her life began to move onward. The strong grief which had paralyzed her was gone. Her mind became eager, craving. She turned over the volumes in the well-assorted library with new interest. By degrees, she gained a certain resignation, quite foreign however to her former light-hearted cheerfulness.

One morning, when Mr. Somerton called and found May almost cheerful again, he told her that death had dissolved her relationship with Astonley, and that she was free. An instant bound of her heart declared her joy, although it was shaded a little, when she came to read of the circumstances attendant upon his death.

CHAPTER XL.

MISANTHROPY

It was with a bankrupt and cynical heart, that Aubrey Craithorne turned his back upon the world, and shut himself up from all intercourse with his kind, unless in cases of emergent illness or accident, if sent for by any of the villagers. Then he scorned wind and weather, and, though at the hour of midnight, rose to obey the summons. This promptness and skill often secured attention from those, who otherwise would have chosen a less sombre visitant, or one who appeared less callous and flinty and uncognisant of their sufferings. The boldest recoiled, after having made an attempt to cross the boundary line of his friendship. It was far from easy to surmount the glacial coldness, which kept him so far aloof from them. He did not possess that benevolence and frankness, that easy temperament, which dissolves incongruous and divers specimens of humanity, into harmonious proportions. But he was just. His generosity was uncalculating. He had the good will of the poor. He respected their labor and reverenced the man, who, day by day, fulfilled his daily toil, faithful and unflinching. He was always accessible to this class. His sarcastic, curling mouth, and moody aspect, was not formidable to such. They knew, by instinct, that he was not to

be imposed upon, but they also knew him to be their friend.

Pain, mortification, discontent, embittered his thoughts. His faith in her he deemed the best, was half blighted, his confidence destroyed. Without hope, without equanimity of temper, he sought in vain for condiments and balms wherewith to cicatrize his wounded affection. Neither could he stay the wild, passionate longings and clamorings of his unfortunate love. In vain he tried to thrust out the dove which had nestled into and warmed his breast. If he wrenched the delicate pinions away from his lacerated soul, in some unguarded hour she stole back and brooded over his thoughts with the old sweetness. He strove with feeble effect, to rend asunder the interlockings of that subtle chain which bound him with its fervent and solemn passion. Doomed to enshrine her image against his will, it was as an empty mockery; yet as impossible to eradicate as the disfiguring *tattoo*, whose ghastly lines have been wrought by suffering, into the flesh. And all this strife, this looking so much after his heart, warred with the ideal which still ran on with runic rhymes, though the sound was low as a dying fountain.

He often betook himself during the day to the long open corridor upon the river-side of the house, where the snow beat about him in long fantastic wreaths. His sick pride, felt akin to cold, rain, wind, storm, and darkness, and long after the darkening twilight fell, his sullen, fitful, unresting footsteps still went on. It cooled the fever which roused his strength into savageness, and silenced the importunate voice of temptation, too, which would whisper to him that she whom he loved was still unclaimed, he might yet snatch at pleasure.

sure. Had he not lived in honor of all good laws? Had he not striven to set his mark high? Had he not avoided every pitfall and snare that could dishonor him? Was there to be no reward for his long persistence? Must the only flower he would have craved to adorn his life wither in his grasp? Why should he turn misanthropist? Why not float down the stream of life, seeking enjoyments that should drown his paltry fretting? Why grieve over a few crushed hopes? Let them moulder in the grave of forgetfulness. Why not be happy to-day, we are not certain of to-morrow's sun? And who knows if all those sublime ideas we call truths shall ever be realized? We do but nourish visions to live on. Our life is as a dream, and the whole earth but a vast sepulchre of graves and decay—a charnel-house for our loves and friendships. Fortunately these fallacies failed to entirely obscure the light which is always pouring down upon this ransomed earth, and the still small voice assured him that there is *one* reality to cling to. It is the dissolver, at last, of all bitterness; the rewarder of all earthly toils—*Duty*. It is this which clothes the soul of the just with more beauty than is englobed in the whole earth.

He wrestled with the dark pleadings from within which called him to sail over passion's gilded sea. He remembered with infinite loathing, the unsightly shipwrecks which he had seen strewn along its alluring shores. After a lapse of weary time, a certain austere tranquillity attested the victory over his baser self. Music, which had jarred upon his ear while racked with regrets and torn with insatiable longings for his lost idol, was inaugurated into his twilight reveries; and the organ's grave repose was broken into strains which, if shaded with a passion of sadness, were sweet.

as those "sweetest songs," which "are born of saddest thought," and which led his impressible imagination from the disquieting present to a hopeful future. He has sealed his lips with self-denial, and stamped the cross upon his heart.

Now, without the manor-house, the snow was melting from the earth. A few more days, and a violet just escaped being crushed by Aubrey's foot. Daffodils began to unloose their yellow tresses, to dance with the April breeze, and the pert robin to purvey the land for his country seat, bold faith and cheer expressed in every movement, as he compasses vast fields of etherdom. Lame is art to copy the emerald tints that camp on the meadows, that tuft the glades; or paint the white coronals of "fragrant snow" that have burst from the leafless stems of the cherry-trees. In the harvest-fields the farmer sows his seed broadcast, and smiles as he dreams of a rich, bounteous, heaped-up board and garner.

CHAPTER XLI.

AT THE FORT.

At one of the harbor fortifications which lie a number of miles below the port of New York, situated upon the narrow gulf, just before it widens into a broader bay, the waters flashed back the sunshine of a radiant afternoon in the month of May. The waves appeared to have lost that minor, which at some hours meets the ear, like the requiem of supernatural sorrow, to which the mysterious hidden soul of man answers back with strange, questioning pathos. Now they just rippled and dabbled the shore in a superficial, lazy swell, as if inclined to go to sleep altogether, and claim a long furlough from bluster and storm.

From the officer's quarters emerged a group of as gay fellows as you would often chance to see together. They gathered, idly, upon the beach, and amused themselves in making water-rings, by tossing white pebbles into the sea.

Such health, jollity, and spirits, such sport and elasticity might, at another time, have offered great attractions to Bayard; but now he sauntered off by himself, or was inclining so to do, when one of the number hailed him.

"Come, Bayard, we cannot stand any defection in *our ranks* to-day. We shall think that you are a

deucedly unsociable fellow, or that you left your heart at the south, if now, like some melancholy Jacques, you go off to muse upon that exiled member alone. Once you wore life as graceful and gay and light as a dancing plume; now you are wild as a falcon, not frank, but remote and continually flying out of sight."

"Halt, I say," shouted another, "and I will tell you of a maiden who frequented these seas last autumn, more beautiful than Undine herself, and one sight of whom would forever chase from your mind all thoughts of ordinary beauties."

"And infuse into my mind rue, hellebore and endless regrets, doubtless," said Bayard, reluctantly returning and seating himself in the midst of the group. "Now, as I have no intention," he continued, "of passing my life in that manner, if I can possibly prevent it, pray, Charlie, be as brief as possible in your narration." So close he margined to the truth yet no one heeded.

"There, don't shake your chestnut locks thus impatiently at me, and I will begin. When you were ordered to Baton Rouge last August, my chevalier, Uncle Sam sent me here, for green sea air and delicate health, probably," tapping his broad chest, "or to ornament the coast, or to show the porpoises and make them tremble at sight of my uniform; all of which I have done, conscientiously, in the way of service. The nights were soft as the tropics, days mellow as June. Immediately we became amphibious beings. Sail-boats, row-boats, fishing smacks, all sorts of oceanic craft were converted into fins by which we undulated through the briny deep. Some miles from here, lower down on the coast, stands an old stone house, built by an eccentric sea captain years ago. An English gentle-

man and his sister took possession of it for the season. Their guest, and relative I believe, was the beautiful Miss Clyde, of Boston."

Here Bayard let drop the handful of pebbles which he was heaving into the sea and fixed his eyes upon the speaker.

"We all agreed to worship her, and we played like whales, (delicate simile, my comrades,) about her yacht, spouting songs of triumphant praise in honor of her eyes, which were so infinitely beautiful and luminous, they fairly lit up the sea, when Luna took the veil, or only 'stars were in the quiet skies.' We nearly turned the brain of a retiring horticulturist, by besieging him so importunately for bouquets and garlands of roses wherewith we converted her barge into a flowery shrine. No Cleopatra was half so divine in her beauty. No Corinne more completely ruled over a Roman audience than this fair Cathara over her worshippers." Bayard winced to hear her name glide so trippingly from his lips.

"Ha, ha! Charlie, spare us the sentiment, you are positively too romantic," cried one of the listeners.

"My talent for recitative is crushed in the bud; but I will come to the end; which was a grand *finale* of a fête or banquet at the old château, as it is called. Then we stood in the presence of this hitherto dimly seen, but wildly worshipped goddess. Evening stars and morning roses, are feeble emblems of her rare beauty. Clothed in a dress of sea-green crape, pearls and corals, had it not been for the menacing being who watched every look, and seemed ready to gnash his teeth with jealousy, I should then and there have offered her all that this uniform contains, without any sort of *reservation*: not as her lover--that would have been

presumptuous—but as her slave, to do her commonest bidding. *J'ai fini.*"

"And what became of them all?" inquired Bayard, quickly.

"Lost, lost—swallowed up in indefinite space," replied the narrator, making a gesture of despair.

"Which, translated, means, that they all went off on a continental tour," replied another one of the group, nodding to Bayard.

With the very slightest gesture of impatience, Bayard rose, then turning with that courtesy so natural to him :

"Thank you, Charlie, for that plain, unvarnished recital," a slight raillery giving significance to his words.

As he strolled off in the direction of a little sail-boat, that was moored at no great distance, and took possession of it, his look was preoccupied to an unusual degree. Two weeks had elapsed since his return from his southern post. The intelligence of his aunt's death had reached him, and he had despatched several letters to May, to which he had received no answer. Sympathy, affection, and anxiety for her, had induced him to make an early application for leave of absence, in order to visit her. This he was daily awaiting.

A new interest now attracted Bayard to guide his boat in the direction of the grey château, where once, we have seen, how unconsciously he had approached within sight of her whom he loved.

He had never so coveted and courted solitude. He loved now to roam over the deep sea in absolute and unbroken abstraction. His life was growing inwardly more eventful. What hidden source was it that fed his hours of reverie; that would not let him

be at rest, and in spite of his better judgment, touched him with prescience, and heart-beats of fervid remembrance for Cathara.

Could it be possible that she had married that handsome young Englishman? The blood chilled in his veins at the thought.

There was too much of that rare quality called moderation in Bayard's character to induce him to commit any of those excesses, importunities, or crimes, so often perpetrated in the name of love. His was a joyous, happy nature, loyal and confiding. Strong and unflinching in a good cause; weak and unavailable in a bad one. The pure tone of his features and complexion might have served as an index of his character, and the free elastic movements, the quick toss of the long clustering hair from his open brow, was as unstudied in its grace, and harmonious in its action, as those of a child. There was no grudging in his nature, no cynicism. No bitter smile wreathed his lips. No sarcasm was flung at love, and woman's inconstancy, because he had not won the woman whom he worshipped.

He was a soldier in the highest sense of the word. Disciplined in fidelity, faithful to honor, he rendered homage to whatsoever claim was laid upon his finer sense. To feel, and to feel exquisitely, was a part of his organization.

He trembled and shrank when he remembered that she whom he loved might even now be the wife of Astonley, while his longing for her was growing into an ecstasy, an absorption, an actuality, which enthralled, subdued, and surprised him. Untraversed paths of hope broadened before his vision with delusions so sweet they abashed him. He blended her name with the mellowing murmur of the sea. He called upon her

passionately, "By all mystic, electric, subtlest intuition, I believe, I believe, Cathara, thou lovest and thinkest of me as I of thee. It is this which plucks so at my heart. I abandon myself to this belief. A bitter task it has been to strike down and try to obliterate the love which has ennobled and enriched my life. I cannot bid all back to lie cold and sealed in its secret place"—while thus he discourses with himself, he is approaching the sea-captain's home. He rests for a moment to glance above, where transparent patches of clouds, such as the sailors call "sheep," fleck the bluest blue. Now they come trooping together near the grey château, like snowy bridesmaids hastening to a bride. And thus it is that, with dreaming *idlesse*, Pierre contemplates the fleecy scenery, unmindful that his destiny is culminating to its meridian hour ; to the unabated glory of his most transcendent longings. He is quietly nearing the shore, he is resolved to land, to explore the stillness which broods over this dark stone structure, which the rising and falling waves leave in untroubled, unvexed quietude. The sun was lying low upon the horizon, but yet its beams played about the leaf-girdled tower. As Pierre raised and riveted his gaze thereon, he wondered if it were a dove that fluttered its wan wing in the centre of that leafy ambuscade. He watches it with curiosity. It was no dove. It was a delicate human hand, intelligent with spirit, importunity, anxiety, which gave life to the impassioned, earnest, reiterated gesture. He springs to the wharf, he stands under the window. He can now catch the gleam of a gem upon one of the slight fingers. It dallies with the sunlight. An indescribable exultation agitates his frame. His heart ceased its beatings for an instant as he grasped a note attach-

ed to a cord that was let down to him. A flash of joy, a burning glow overspread Pierre's brow as he read Cathara's name and saw her writing. It was no delusion, he kissed the little missive and pressed it to his heart with a frantic delight. It ran thus:

“To PIERRE BAYARD:—I see you approach from my window in this tower, where I am a prisoner. Help to liberate me, Cathara Clyde. Be cautious and wary of the priest who watches and guards the house. Within the large envelope you will find the impressions taken from the locks which you must open to release me. Come to-morrow night. It will be moonlight. I shall watch for you an hour after midnight. The large letter will give you the fullest instructions, and have pity upon me,

CATHARA CLYDE.”

Pierre sent back on the blank leaf, which he secured to the cord,

“Rely upon your devoted friend,

“PIERRE BAYARD.”

CHAPTER XLII.

DEAD OF NIGHT.

By aid of the glass Cathara watched the receding boat until it became a mere speck in the far distance; then she laid it down and sprang lightly from the table upon which she had been standing to gain an outlook. She ran to Lina and threw her arms about her neck.

“Lina, my blithe bird, my more than friend, my heart is filled with joy. It cannot hold its new-born gladness. Oh! believe, Lina, that not a sparrow falleth, without He who dwelleth in immensity beholds it. Let us pray for an unfaltering trust in Providence. A trust so entire that we can see those shining bands whom He sends to encamp about and deliver us when sorrows, trials and death await. Let us never lose sight of Him who has rescued and saved—who loves us though sin-sick and blighted, bruised and stained with deformities. I feel a rest so deep, it is like a glimpse of that everlasting rest that is a portion of the blessed. Faith, Lina, is prophet, priest, and king, to the soul; leading us upward and forever inspiring us with the sublimity of our immortal inheritance. This gift of life, is so strangely, so immeasurably beautiful. Oh! that I might comprehend the splendors of His secret ways. The full meaning of joy, freedom, light, love,” and the young girl, excited, happy, grateful, wept

upon the neck of the warm-hearted Italian. And the moon, mounting securely the azure acclivity, flung her robes of silver over the clinging forms of tender, weeping, embracing womanhood. And as if her shining hand had leisure for every thing, she copied a cool, shadowy picture in *bas relief* against the opposite wall of the room, of the ivy's dainty wavering foliage, and Cathara smiled as she saw this relic of the moon's art. And her sleep that night was of sovereign blessedness, in which worship, prayer, and rejoicing went on, folded in its own sweetness as a flower slumbers in its dewy bud.

The next morning Cathara ran to the window to dip her hands in the sunshine. When her companion entered she drew her to the window, and pointing to the sun,

“Lina, I watched him rise from his purple throne. He has bespoken a royal revel for this day. He has bidden joy to be on the earth, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.”

In her young heart's fresh, exuberant sympathy, Lina clapped her hands and cried, “Oh! it is so lovely, so perfect, to be happy; and how beautiful it makes you; you look as if you would fly. I shall watch and see that you have no little wings concealed to fly away from me, and indeed,” and her voice changed into a mournful key, “that is just what you intend to do;” and the tears dropped from her cheeks and rolled to the floor.

“Fie, Lina, laugh. I will steal you away soon enough, after I am gone. I will build you a bower in my garden, lined with roses, where you shall live, until a young king of valor, a chevalier *sans peur et sans reproche*, shall come and carry you away!”

Lina smiled like young Iris through her tears, as she said :

“ Will all that come to pass, dear lady ? ”

“ I think it must. All things seem possible in the glow of this adventurous morning.”

And then she added, in a whisper, “ I am afraid lest my bright secret will fly through the door and reach the priest. We have our plans to perfect, and much consultation for this day.” It was well that Cathara did not know that her jailor had determined that very night to abscond with his prize, or it might have troubled her happiness sorely. Secure from Astonley’s interference, he feared no danger to his cherished plans. And it would have been to neglect the interests of his church and to oppose Providence, not to obtain the half million and more of worldly goods which pertained to this young lady. Furthermore, this was the path by which he was to climb to, and claim, high office from the Superior. He had chartered a steam-barge to land at the wharf that night. He proposed to sail for Boston, and from thence to proceed to Montreal, there to place the fair heretic in the convent. There was a mingled look of gratified cunning and cupidity, gleaming from his bead-like eyes, which redeemed his face from the lifelessness which he wore as an habitual mark ; and he affected an air of devout absorption, crossing himself and turning over the links of his rosary, as though fearful some unseen mortal would penetrate his ambitious schemes even in his secret chamber. He drew his cowl partly over his head, as he went down into his private closet, to prepare a draught that should the more effectually seal the eyes of the heiress and those of Lina, in a deep, unconscious slumber, that all things might be accomplished.

in a quiet and orderly manner, when the hour should arrive. And for this, he commanded himself, and complacency marked every movement, as he concocted the sleeping potion. The priest loved his craft, which was to work by stealth. Gently, prudently, insidiously, he exulted in secret power. Full of all subtlety, loving tortuous, twisted, devious paths, he envied no man his position or power if he must needs live transparent to his fellow-man, and walk abreast with ingenuousness. Verily, every man chooseth his own happiness. This man rejoiced to dwell in opaque darkness.

Long before the morning, whose glad breaking Cathara had found in glowing unison with her high-beating hopes, Pierre had emerged noiselessly from the officer's quarters ; past the soldiers' barracks ; past the drowsy morning sentinel. Slowly he paced along the sandy margin of the grey sea.

Sleep had no power to imprison the tumultuous life, the joy, the surprise, that fermented in the heart of this watcher of the dawn, as, over and over again, he pursued his path by the lone shore. Nature appeared like a veiled vestal at her matins ; and the ocean, like some reverent pilgrim, lay, devout, at the foot of God, as if cradling her tides in silent prayer. The morning stars had gone. Only a dim light hovered, as a mystery, over the fathomless abyss of waters. At length Pierre saw, afar off, a distant wave as it caught a glow of light ; as it rippled, like a jewel, its changeable dyes. It played with the trembling waves, until it rolled its molten rubies, its fiery, fringed tide to the ocean's edge ; and Beauty led on blue-eyed Day, beaming full and clear.

Lady, priest, soldier—each intent, earnest, watchful. *The latter, stricken with love—its romance ; its*

tenderness ; its enchantment, thought the sun a laggard in mounting to the zenith that day. "Wait, my impatient Hotspur. I have seen lovers before you. In all creation there are not such strange people. To-day, an hour is eternity. To-morrow, a day has shrivelled into a moment. I should, indeed, be a worthless chronometer, if I crossed the meridian line by your data."

Cathara having assorted and placed the most valuable of her jewels, and some rare and costly laces ; the miniatures of her father and mother ; and the Prayer Book of the latter, in a small satchel, which could easily be carried, bequeathed all that remained to her faithful friend and companion. Lina, playful as an elf, disported among the glories of her new acquisition, now draping a gauzy scarf of gold-spun tissue about her pliant waist, or trailing some sweeping robe in mock majesty after her, or wreathing a gay chaplet of bright buds about her glossy head, from out of which, she smiled, lustrous as summer.

"Quite like a fairy story," sang out her gay, fresh accents : "I have to pull my hair, to be sure that this is little Italian Lina."

But Cathara answered not ; her head drooped upon the sofa-pillow ; her hands were clasped above her dreaming brow, disclosing, as the flowing sleeve fell off, her arms of rare and exquisite beauty. Her eyes looked out upon the sky. It was evident her thoughts were drifting away into those regions of pictorial illusion, whose names are not laid down upon charts or globes, and yet the path into these mysterious lands is accessible, and may be approached from any point all over the world.

Cathara's face, in its repose, its purity, its inten-

sity of womanly tenderness, was Love's self. It was but a brief intromission into ideal life, and with a change in her attitude, and a slight smile, which seemed to chide reverie at such a moment, she went on to complete her toilette, and then to watch and wait for the midnight.

The point upon which the sea château was built was a jutting peninsula—an arm of the sea stretched inland. A narrow white beach ran along its margin, on the near side to the château, then the land, as you proceeded, rose in abrupt, bold bluffs, not high, but almost perpendicular, at least fifteen feet, and stretched off in a barren plateau covered with a few dwarfed shrubs. A rough irregular path had been laid out in days gone by, from the dwelling down to this estuary, where the tide rushing up this narrow channel, set in with great force and ebbed off with similar power. Pierre had explored this pass during the day, when the tide was out, and sands and rocks lay bare. It was by Cathara's wish, in her letter of directions, that he came alone, to avoid any possible publicity that might otherwise be given, if her imprisonment were to be made known, and she shrank from the thought of being talked of as the heroine of an adventure.

A light vehicle had been obtained to accomplish the intervening distance of a number of miles, which led to a little village with its railroad station, from whence they could thus easily reach New York. Pierre having arrived, fastens the horses to a stunted pine tree, and looks at his watch. It was nearing twelve. Aside from his quickening pulses, the scene itself was productive of emotion. The distant roar of the ocean, the white border of the beach, dazzling in the moonlight, the low forms of vegetation swaying fantasti-

cally in the night breeze, and looking like witches upon a heath. The waters flash back the silver net-work, shining as a warrior's armor, while the moon embosomed herself deep down in the heart of the luring sea.

The château and its tower repose in ebon shadow. Each movement of Bayard's is that of a man collected, well poised, self-contained, not to be turned from his purpose. Every feature is sharpened with resoluteness. He stoops now and feels for the lock in the darkness. He does not shrink from betraying its integrity in so good a cause. It yields. There is another and similar one, and he has turned that also, and opened the door without a sound. His muffled footsteps are shod with list sandals. A faint light just glimmers through the corridor. He pauses, listens; all is silent as a tomb. He mounts the staircase fleetly, and stands at the door, which opens into the tower. It creaks upon its hinges as he opens it; fearing lest the sound may reach the ears of the priest, he plunges into the room, and receives the agitated girl. He turns, refastens the door. Feeling Cathara tremble upon his arm, he raises her and carries her down the flight of stairs, and so on out of the door, which he also relocks with deliberate care. The path is too narrow now for him to support his companion; he stoops to part and tread away the foliage which impedes her progress over the rough way. At last this toilsome effort is over, and both standing upon the shining snow-white beach, pause and breathe more freely. For an instant they watched the Atlantic heaving her great rollers into this arm of the sea, and swelling the tide into a foaming spray.

Was it the night wind that whispers low in her ear, *as he lifts her to the carriage, stirring every beating*

pulse with its magical sound ? Ah ! sweeter than the night breeze, more delicious and subtle she hears him whisper her name, "Cathara, Cathara," and for one instant he presses her fervently to his heart. But he remembers, and the thought withholds him that once she had turned away from his love, which though unspoken was none the less indicated and apparent. He will not presume upon the confiding tenderness of the hour. Magnanimity, valor, honor, forbid him to misinterpret the fervid gratitude which bursts from her lips in language so earnest, and in tones so quickening with emotion.

He was jealous to be loved for himself, extraneous to all sense of circumstance or service rendered. He would not importune for a reluctant sympathy, and in silence they pursued their course. On their right, rose a precipitous ledge of uneven, rocky bulwarks. Between them and the frith filling more and more with the foaming sea, lay their path of sand ; as he drove rapidly onward, Bayard saw that this pathway was growing more and more slender. He paused, rose in his seat, looked back. The heaving crests of the ocean were eddying and roaring into this inland channel with a gathering power.

"Look, look," he cried, "that last surge has swept away half of our foothold. We must flee to the rocks. Who knows how high this full tide reaches."

The affrighted horses plunged with terror, but as the tide ebbed again they stood still and trembled. Bayard cut their traces to give the poor creatures a chance, then extending his arms to Cathara, "Will you trust me ?" The young girl smiles as she accepts his aid. "The next breaker will cover this hand-breadth of sand. How will you ever scale this jagged

peak? Your safety depends upon it," and guiding her foot to a projecting point on the black ledge, which he could only feel, not see, for all the rocks were obscure in shadow, he found a similar one for himself, and with his arm around her, he held her with a firm grasp. Her slender feet had barely room, her hands clung to a rocky protuberance.

"In God's name, I implore you, hold on firm. Do not look back. Do not grow giddy. If there be a place, an atom to stand upon, you must climb to it. The next wave will cover this point."

Menaced by death from the rising tide, the desperate aspect of this perilous pass was almost as formidable; yet, aided by the tender solicitude of her lover, Cathara climbed section after section of this sharp, rough-coated wall, until panting, breathless, exhausted by her unusual effort, her hands bruised and bleeding with clinging to the sharp gritty jags, her courage gave way.

"I have no more strength left. I am worn and spent. I cannot see where to go; we have barely escaped that last plunge of billows; save yourself and let me go."

"What you, my life!" in *such* a voice. "Now or never, a few more steps and we are safe. The tide must reach its ultimatum soon, if it has not now."

It was as Bayard said. A few more steps up those gnarled crags and irregular ridges, and the angry chafing ocean ceased its mad play against this insignificant barrier.

Bayard found a broad hollow in the rock. Here he sat down, and, wrapping his cloak about the pale girl, he dropped tears and kisses upon the two little wound-

ed hands ; and holding her close to his breast, he bade her rest.

As he kept holy vigil over her, his love seemed fathomless and mystic as the great ocean which rolled at his feet.

And when at length her dark eyes searched his face with a gleam and womanly tenderness, he felt his whole being surge to her in an unimaginable tide.

It was an equal exchange of hearts. Their minds held for each a joy indestructible ; for they loved the Fair in nature and in art, and, most of all, they loved the Fair in life, which rounds into symmetry the Immortal. The sky seemed to touch them with a heavenly benediction, as their full beating finite love went up in silent prayer to "Love Divine, all love excelling," to hallow and consecrate their betrothal. Whatever struggles and wanderings may be their lot in life's journey before them, this hour, deep-dyed, will remain forever. They sat looking at each other in a rhapsody that the world smiles at ; but what care lovers for the shows and seemings of a world they have forgotten in the intoxication of mutual devotion ? Broad lilac streamers struck out from the east, the planets paled, the sun stood securely in the blue circling arch, before the love glance had half spent its dearest joy, its abundant happiness.

It was not long before a sailing vessel passed near them. Pierre waved his mantle, and the sailors made preparations to send out a little boat for them. They found an easier path which led down the rocks by the daylight.

Cathara smiled to see a flock of sea-gulls—snowy aeronauts—fly over their heads in circling incertitude, then dart downward and athwart the sea. How joyous

was their sense of freedom, sporting in wild aerial life! She watched the fishes as they leaped up out of the water and let the sun play upon their jewelled scales. Life, freedom, love, the whole earth was translated into the poetry of gladness for the lovers.

As they sailed into the interior of the land, the sleeping beauty of the world woke up. The day was one of the loveliest. Farms, clover fields, and neat houses appeared. Lilacs and syringas offered fragrance from their dewy blossoms. It was merry May for the birds. It was merry May for the newly-pledged souls. It was merry May for God's blithe, redeemed, beautiful earth.

Let its abodes be more and more sacred, since the feet of the Man of Sorrows have trod its lonely mountains, its desert wastes, and seas.

CHAPTER XLIII.

MATCHES AND OVER-MATCHES.

THE stealthy priest, accustomed to mark the hours of the night by his *aves* and *pater nosters*, as a sailor casts his watches, his preparations complete, secure of his plan, hearing nothing, sleeps quietly until the appointed moment for waking. He has perfected all his arrangements when the barge heaves in sight. He writes a few words to his niece, bidding her "amuse herself as well as she can for a few days, when he will return and take her to Baltimore, where she shall live a freer life, if she still desires to try the hollowness of the world and its empty pleasures." On tip-toe, as if he feared to wake up some invisible host, whose shadows rustled along the corridor as the night-taper traced his cowl and mantle in sombre and gigantic panorama, he stole on, with furtive glance at every corner of the dim, silent hall. He bends over Lina. He knows well enough that she is buried in sleep. Did not he himself mix the sleeping draught? She will not waken in several hours yet, nor the young lady either; and back he retraces his steps and unlocks the door. Two of his brethren enter.

"Are all things in readiness?" he asks.

"Yes. Bring your prize on board at once, before the day breaks," is the quick response.

"Follow me then, quietly, in case of disturbance, and I will bring the lady down. She will not waken," he added, with a significant gesture, to indicate the nostrum he had administered.

Lighting two thin tapers he places them in the hands of his myrmidons, and leading the way up the staircase, he pauses and unlocks the door. All was dark within. He passes on to her sleeping room. She is not there, nor on the sofa, nor in the next room. His false heart beat aghast. His knees shake beneath him. Was he a prey to delusion? Were his senses growing treacherous? She *must* be there; and yet he could not see her. He opened the closets, the ante-rooms, ascended the attic, now calling her name, as he traversed the empty space, flinging the contents of the old broken foreign crate wildly about, as though she could lie hid beneath that mass of fragmentary and miscellaneous spoil. Great drops gathered upon his brow and rolled down his face. He felt staggered, overwhelmed, foolish. "I know she is safe somewhere," he screamed to his companions who, led on at first by motives of curiosity, now stop to sneer, and at length, on seeing him follow over the line of march again, peeping into the same drawers, trunks, and crevices, ridiculously small nooks and crannies, come to the conclusion that he is a crazed man pursuing a phantom.

This they express to him in no measured or ecclesiastical phrase, after a low contemptuous laugh from the younger—

"Idiot, fool, madman, jabbering jackanapes, may the devil fly away with you, for an old trickster;" and having thoroughly lost their tempers, they were making a speedy exit, when the baffled, enraged Jesuit led them as a last resource to his niece's chamber.

“Ah, here is your pretty bird at last,” said the younger, and seizing her he would have borne her off in the most zealous manner.

“Stop, you rascally dog, she is my niece, I tell you;” and stooping he shook Lina with great violence, as anxious now that she should waken as a few moments past that she should sleep; but the opiate, of which she had unwittingly drank the greater portion, Cathara being too excited to partake of the evening meal, now locked her senses in profound unconsciousness.

“Come on, Padre,” said the younger, “the day is breaking, and we had better not stop to be overhauled by these Yankee kites. Good-by, you old screech-owl, I am a good mind to give you a taste of salt bathing to pay you for bringing us here on your wild errands.”

Left alone, clenching his hands in impotent wrath, he went off and groped outside and under the tower window to see if she had not thrown herself from thence, rather than fairly to have eluded him. It would have been quite clear to an observer that the leaven of malice and wickedness had never been exterminated from the heart of this crooked, craven celibate, as he cursed the receding barge, cursed himself, cursed many holy names, in which saints and Pope’s bulls were oddly blended in strange blasphemies. Alas! his heart, like many another, was only pasted over with a thin crust of piety, beneath which seethed the boiling gulf, a man’s fiery selfish passions.

He had tried to serve the devil, and that arch deceiver had left him in the lurch, for so he termed the individual who had aided his prisoner to escape—for who but the devil could have carried her off. All the lines of his pretty spider’s web, that matchless series

of coiling circlets, whose mechanism was so beautiful to him to spin, shivered in a moment.

Without a hope upon which to fasten a new filament to ensnare or entangle a victim, he walked out of the morning light into the dreary house, dull and disconsolate, and sat down and sulked.

CHAPTER XLIV

T E M P E S T.

SUMMER sunshine lay warm upon the little brown house, framed in by the high arching, low drooping boughs of the broad-spread elm. It looked like a picture in its silence—a very paradise of sylvan seclusion—a vision of rest and unbroken privacy, haunted only by birds, tending their birdlings, whispering musical secrets or wandering in and out from the purple, tender, brooding sky. From apple blossoms, and sweet-briar bushes, these amateurs of nature returned to sing her praises in every variety of trill and quaver. May Temple walked out of the house across the lawn, which the elm boughs chequered, out of the moss-grown gate, and by the cool and shady side of the road-path towards the burying-ground. A basket filled with plants is upon one arm, her round hat hangs by its ribbon to the other. Her hair drifts back upon the deliciously-scented breezy air. The place of graves is decorated with verdure. Dandelions bestud the grass and balance the dew drop. Wild eglantine weaves natural chaplets about many a lowly mound. May glides on to the enclosure so dear to her. She transplants lilies of the valley and stars of Bethlehem, her mother's favorite flowers, to bloom over the silent form. Sorrowing tears fall fast upon the sod, yet the place looked pleasant to her. Here was a certain silent com-

panionship for her. Here she felt nearer to the better country. Long she lingered, often looking back and retracing her steps, then slowly toward the woods. With a discriminating glance she perused the landscape. It was pervaded by a tender placid beauty that soothed her heart. When she thought of the winter that had passed away, cold, icy, and barren, how the whole earth had been locked in pitiless drear, almost a pain, or an ache, or a shiver, lurking in every inhalation of the atmosphere, and now to behold the green and glorious plumes of the lofty trees, which hang their light foliage bright and high, as if seeking to embrace the arch above ; the fields enamelled with buds and cups of purple, where blooms of rose and amethyst unfold in graceful forms on myriads of plants, laden with delicate aroma, charging the delicious air with thrilling spiritual reminiscence of balmy Eden's lost gardens—an elysium of perfume which encircles not only the body but the spirit in its blest environment—when the bubbling voices of the rills and carollings of songsters, and murmurs of bees, congregate in one grand Alleluiah, it seemed to her that the dissimilitude between the season of blight and the season of rejoicing was as earth must be to heaven.

“ Oh ! then, that I might be there soon,” crossed her mind ; but as her eye roved to the heavy shade through which a mere glimpse of Craithorne Manor glistened, her heart beat ; her cheek flushed ; the long lashes fell over her full, shadowy eyes. She was still a denizen of the flower-crowned earth, and she forgot that just now heaven seemed so near. She was athirst for Aubrey's sympathy. Where was *he*, when the breeze, bland and capricious, was calling every human creature to come forth and rejoice ?

The gospel of nature commanded Aubrey to be happy. His dark thoughts, his miserable repinings, his misanthropic humor, might thrive, shut up in the close confines of a library, where he could take counsel, if he would, with gloomy authors. But what had such melancholy humors to do with the long beams of mottled gold that paved his path as he tracked the woods and loitered by some leaping woodland stream? Nothing, absolutely nothing. They only mellowed his thoughts and softened his heart to no purpose whatsoever.

Nature might flush and kindle hopes, but she could never restore to him his lost bride. A despot he resolved to be over every soft emotion, to crush, curb, and control every sickly fancy. Women had been the bane of his father's life, a curse and snare to his own happiness, ever since his mother fretted him to death in his boyhood with her perverse and eternal inconsistencies; her wayward and tiresome solicitude. And hence he immured himself for a series of summer days, assorting, reviewing a case of foreign books, and now and then stopping to browse a little when he found goodly pasturage, beguiling himself with bits from a collection of German and English authors that had but recently been unboxed. It was a warm morning, the last day of May, when, as Aubrey was thus immersed, and in the same harsh, bitter frame of thought, he heard a quick rattling peal of thunder burst, as it were, directly over his head. The curtains streamed from their fastenings, the day became dark as night. Aubrey rose and walked to the window; the heavens were rolling with black grey clouds. He remembered that the sun had risen with a still hot burning power, *and, sheathed in its red orb lay the fiery wing of the*

lightning, now dashing in uncoiled tongues of flame, followed by the thunderbolt's crashing, stunning peal. The great trees quivered with the ferment of the sudden tempest. Hailstones rained furiously down. Fairly roused at last from his investigations, Aubrey leaped to a full appreciation of the storm. The servants ran in all directions to shut out the rain from the open windows. The roof of the observatory was blown off; Aubrey saw it light upon a tall oak, whose topmost branch it cracked off like a pipe-stem. As the great trees of the manor bend heavily to the east, he sees over them in the direction of May's house; he is sure the great elm has fallen prostrate. What feeling is it that proves Aubrey's philosophy to be lacking in the hour of trial? What emotion goads him with a sense of remorse, cruelty, and savageness, which rankle, like a barbed arrow, in his heart? The thought of actual harm to May sickened him and made him hate himself for what he now called his long abandonment of her, during all the past dreary winter.

He calls for his horse. The groom ventures to remonstrate. He is instantly silenced and put aside. He runs quickly to the stables. The servants in vain cry after and implore him to come back. He leaps down the broad avenue, amidst falling and crashing branches, drenching rain and vivid lightning, while the ground trembles beneath him with the shock of the pealing thunder. Never had he so felt the might and power of the love which was rooted at his heart's core. It was like the pant of an enraged lion rising within him, and adding tenfold life to his ordinary condition.

On he sped, while the frightened animal snorted with terror, blindly dashing on, frantic, as the keen flashes of flame dazzle his eye-balls. The Rectory was

in sight—a mass of ruins—crushed by the bending tree, its giant trunk snapped and broken.

Bewildered at the extent of the calamity he shouted in hollow tones, “ May, May,” but the wind whistled the words away. Naught but the groans of the crackling, writhing branches could be heard amid the reverberating peals, sounding from hill-top to mountain, and the hail-stones driving like shot through the torn leaves. The demolition of the house was complete. Chimney, roof, rafter, window, a mass of hopeless desolation. A yawning crack gaped ghastly through the centre of the house, but it was impossible to enter even afoot. Oh! how his heart had like to burst then with agony and tender love. He rode around and around the house in sick uncertainty, horror, and doubt. The rain now suddenly ceased—as suddenly as it came. The wind was dying away, the fury of the storm had expended itself. Over and over again Aubrey traversed the ruins, calling, supplicating May to answer. No voice replied. Only the swollen brook murmured sullenly.

“ And yet, under those ruins she may be stifling, breathing her last in low moans which do not reach my ear. Help! help! ” he cried incoherently, as he goaded on his horse, and pursues in the direction to the Manor, for aid to disentomb the lost girl. While he grasped at this forlorn hope, he felt death-struck, transfixed and benumbed with unspeakable wretchedness. His face is ashen. A mighty anguish sharpens and pinches his features into a strange expression of torture. The sickness of despair sits in his relaxed muscles. Mechanically he pushes on. Fitful ejaculations burst from his pallid lips—“ My God, oh! have pity! Save her! save her! ” His eye roves wildly over the storm-beat scene—some creature may stand in need of help. In

the burial-ground, that extends along the road-side, he sees a tall column laid low, and some of lesser note lying prostrate. But what is that which lies in the Temple enclosure? Not the monument. That stands, pointing skyward, as of old. He prolongs his gaze. A thought like an electric shock cleaves his brain. He clears the yew hedge with a fearful leap, and clatters like another tempest among the grave-stones, to reach that stricken form. A great chasm yawns near, as though the relentless, remorseless earth had not been satiated with youth and beauty enough, but must now open wide its greedy portals for May, for she it was. He raises her triumphantly in his arms, but there is something in that icy brow and those lips of marble that chills his soul. Aghast he rides on with his drenched and helpless burden, calling upon her name in tones that might have roused the dead. Once more he hurries on, in a fever of desperation. An eternity of thought as well as of distance seemed measured out in his impatience to leap at one bound over the distance and attain unto the Manor.

Ever and anon their hurried motion wafted her long fair curls, to blow about his breast. Where now was his ire, his bitterness, his fevered jealousy? Passed away like the hot simoon of the desert. His heart bled at every pore, as he gazed upon her sweet lips, her death-white lineaments. The eager, anxious servants now press round with acclamations, to greet their master's safe return from his perilous ride; but the sight of the stony grief depicted on his countenance, and more, the pale girl he bore, froze their words. He would not resign his burden, but giving a sign to the housekeeper and her attendant, he proceeded to apply every restorative.

Two long hours were passed in efforts the most continuous—rubbing, chafing, warming the limbs. Another hour elapsed. In vain they tried to induce Aubrey to lay aside his torn and drenched apparel. His eyes were rivetted like dull lamps of despair upon her face. His hand holds her pulse. Oh! Heaven! was it his imagination? He bends still nearer, it is not a delusion. The tiny pulsation yields its stroke. The bands of agony are loosed. His voice broke forth in an incoherent cry of gratitude, so fervent and exultant, as to vibrate upon May's muffled ear. Her eyes slowly unclose—she recognizes Aubrey—a half smile faints upon her lip. The languid lids close again. Aubrey, this compound of iron tendons and flesh of oak, overpowered by the shock of joy, hastened to seat himself in a chair. He felt weak as a child, and as docile, submitting himself to be guided to his room—to a change of garments—and even drank down a huge bowl of hot bone-set, which the housekeeper assured him was necessary to his life. Good woman, it was her patent elixir, and what a triumph for her!

May was borne to a pleasant room, released from her wrappings, enveloped in a fine state robe, worn by Mrs. Craithorne in her early bridal days, and laid carefully under a lace canopy, which fell transparent over the stately carved pillars. When she awoke it was in the afternoon; the day-beams were stealing in through the crevices of the shutters. She thought she was upon a white throne, so elevated and ample spread the pillows, the lace and fine linen about her—Where was she? She had never seen such delicate green velvet medallions as those upon the walls, nor such snowy lilies as were painted in their centre.

She marvelled at the green satin coverlet, and its

perfection of lilies in white embroidery work ; she raised one of her slender hands, pink and flushed from excess of warmth, looked at it, acknowledged it for her own, and quickly thrust away the green quilt which threatened to stifle her. As she poised herself upon one arm, the long fair curls fell over a face soft and exquisite as a rose. She looked like a naiad rising from a green shell, as she parted the lace curtains and peeped inquisitively forth. At that instant, Aubrey, still anxious for her, stole in on tip-toe, and caught her innocent, startled glance. A flush, as of coral, deepened her cheek when Aubrey, following out a resistless impulse, sprang to her side, kissed her brow, and vanished like a meteor. I defy any woman not to be happy under the circumstances, and yet she could not help speculating, as women are prone to do about a man's principles. Did he know that she was free to marry him ? She must put him to the test, and see if he were all she believed him. She must run great risks for the sake of establishing her own theories, enter perhaps into painful expostulation, when it would have been so easy to say, "Aubrey, I am free ;" but then, if he prove high-minded, heroic, true, which she is persuaded he will, then she will give him her life, if need be. As a bird builds her nest out of shreds and moss patches, so a woman loves to fasten upon the slenderest materials to weave a drama, where life may unfold full, clear, decided, yet filled in with islands afloat in golden nebulæ. The sumptuously draped, delicately wrought, translucent folds of lace could contain her no longer. It was a moment in which to soar on full-fledged wings ; all the inborn sportiveness, which had so long been buried under the ashes of sorrow, asserted itself with her new-

coming joy, and she flew swiftly out upon the wood-green, moss-textured carpet.

To be thoroughly happy, is to be graceful, inspired ; with the most entire play of the poetical part of our nature. Was all this delicious hope for herself? No ; it was that she held the happiness of another in her keeping, with the power to make that happiness to its earthly utmost. As thus she stood with her little pink feet—marvels of form—buried ankle-deep in the velvet, with a passion of weeping and a shout of exultation, old Deborah, who had been absent during the storm at a camp-meeting, now opened the door, and clasping her in her arms, sobbed for joy over her lost darling.

“ You might have died like a shelterless lamb, with no one to pity or save you ; oh ! oh ! What will happen next ? ”

May shed a few rainbow drops, the smiles coming so fast as to displace the tears. Deborah stepped back to scrutinize and to wonder at the voluminous folds of cambric which enveloped her ; the waves upon waves of endless embroidery underlaid with blue ribbon. At the same moment May caught sight of her reflection in the tall glass, and sunk down on the carpet with laughing over the odd image. It was so long since Deborah had seen all the dimples of her darling’s face break loose with blytheness, that she was afraid lest she was over-excited with fever, and gravely felt her pulse, at which May was more amused than before.

“ Am I really so alarming when I am happy ? Oh ! Debbie, think, I have nothing more in the world to put on in place of this ghostly trail ; I shall soon tire of such classic drapery.”

“ Goodness, what is to be done ? —shall I go and find the housekeeper, and see if we can make a muster ? ”

“Do, while I brush out my hair.” She paused after Deborah went out, to look at the costly arrangements of the toilette table. An immense cushion of crimson velvet occupied the centre; on either side were ornate jewel cases, inlaid with mosaics, and surrounded by crystal cut glasses, filled with perfumes; ivory stands held combs ornamented with antique devices; the brushes were embossed with emerald and rose papier maché. A feminine admiration held her, and still the ringlets hung untouched in all their flossy bewilderment, when the housekeeper, quite triumphant, entered, bearing, with the aid of Deborah, a vast brown linen bag. May eyed it with astonishment, as out of its shield they drew a shining vesture.

“It was ordered by Miss Isabel to wear to a grand ball, but it did not suit her; she told me to take it away and wear it myself. A nice butterfly I’d make,” said the housekeeper, surveying her broad proportions, and shaking out the gauzy triple skirt. “It looks just as if it had been trimmed with butterflies’ wings; now don’t it?”

Twice during the toilette preparations had a summons come for “Miss Temple to come down into the library,” from the impatient Aubrey. The dress was put on and fitted exquisitely. At last she was ready, and following the servant through the great hall (superbly pictorial, in fresco) she ascended a short flight of steps, and on through another broad gallery, guarded by two statues clad in a fine armor of glittering mail. The burnished links of steel caught the light of two silver lamps suspended above them. Not daring to pause, yet feeling as if she were borne through some region of enchantment, the arched door of the library was swung noiselessly open. Its occupant stood transfixed and

silent to regard her, as she slowly advanced. Her dress was of pale amethyst color, embroidered in golden stars. Upon her shoulders lay a scarf wrought in Oriental pattern, its magnificent fringes spreading to the hem of her robe. The sheen of her fair tresses, the dewy gleam of her eye, the interlight of her new happiness, which had brought back her native charming buoyancy of aspect, made her appear, under the clear light, delicately resplendent.

“What Chrysalis is this, my Psyche, my darling?” as he led her to a seat, and contemplated her with a rapture of admiration.

“Are you come at last, here, where so often I have longed for you, mourned you, where I have grown harsh, sardonic, miserable? And now you have been thrown into my arms. I have warmed you into life. You are mine, mine. Oh! it is a glorious thing to think of living with you, whom alone I love. What though a thousand impediments stand between us, a thousand vows bind you to others in strange alliance; here I solemnly aver nothing shall come between us, if I have to make a stronghold to keep them out.” His eyes flashed resolute, as he went on vindicating his purpose, while he grasped her hand, and caressed it warm and close to his breast.

“May, will you give me your love now, generously, unreservedly? Can a vow to a man who has neglected you for years be a barrier between us? You are absolved from that vow, although no law in this State may have released you.”

“There is no use in glossing it over,” said May, drooping her eyes; “if the law did not release me, it would be wrong, I could not assent. Have you not faith to wait and trust?”

"Is that your resolution? Unhappy girl, your passive endurance passes my comprehension," and turning away from her, he leaned upon a table near, and buried his face within his hands.

"Accept me! accept me quickly!" cried May, in a stifled voice, as she leaned over him. "Did you not read it? I am free. The law of death has released me. Oh! take me. I have no one in the wide world to cling to but you."

He held her close, his impassioned breath just making audible, "Now, now, I could give you up, God is so generous to me," folding her still closer, "I am melted with contrition at my evil thoughts and ask for nothing."

There was silence, and the beating of hearts entranced, and longings, and dreams, and prayers, which are the waves of life forever beating and breaking upon the unknown and mysterious shore.

Aubrey has obtained his beautiful ideal—she for whom he will spare no sacrifices, struggles, and toils. Earth contains nothing half so lovely and desirable. She is the prophet to him of the good and fair on earth, and of a heaven hereafter. The lustre of the evening sun swept aslant the trees and pierced the lofty windows of the library, with a transcript of the crimson shadows which tremble like plumes of fire against the dark wainscoting and over the brows of the rapt lovers, as now, winning a smile and acclamation of delight, these trophies and fantasias of color, picturing tossing leaf and ruby spray, attracted their eyes. They sat in a light as vaguely strange in its glimmering beauty as the thrall and passion which cradled their hearts.

It seemed altogether audacious that common mortals should dare to infringe upon or disturb their pri-

vacy. But so it was, the old butler had almost wrought himself up to a dramatic point when he reviewed and surveyed the day. Nothing disturbed him like irregularities ; and this day had been to him a chaos in which he had lost his proper bearings. He desired to have life one smooth plane, and to travel so far upon it each day, finishing and rounding up each hour's duty with all due propriety. Method, to him, was the only sign in the zodiac of life that represented the lasting fitness of things ; irregularity dropped him instanter from off the belt which smoothly orb'd his world, into a purgatorial pit, where he groped comfortless. He was first sullen, then irate, at last desperate. He declared that the world was topsy-turvy ; everybody had got their brains addled ; that the old manor would soon go to wreck and ruin ; that twice he had ordered dinner and cleared it off, and that no one minded the summons any more than if they were dead men, that they might all as well be dead as to live in such a place."

No madam in her highest tantrums ever proved a sharper nettle in the sides of a household than this neat, orderly, vigilant, restless old housewife butler.

He blew up one of the younger maids for diverting herself with the tricks and sportive grace of a kitten at such an untimely moment. His eyeballs almost glared upon her as still she continued to war with the petty foe, who fiercely sprung for the ball that she wheeled around him.

" You are all out of sorts, you old humdrum," she said, as he seized the kitten and put it outside the door, " and if you could only make me as cross as yourself, you'd feel better ; but you can't ; I am in tip-top humor to-day, and I haven't yet forgotten who it

was that helped me out of a tight corner the other day. You just stand still, old grubby, while I straighten you out. Do you suppose people in love want your dinners crammed down their throats? Now they're in love, and you've got to tempt them with something out of the common way.

“ You just go and get all the roses and strawberries and pretty things you've got, and make a real shiny, fancy table of it, and then go into the room and get down on your knees and beg them, and they'll come, and after you have got over the first meal you'll be all in harness again.”

“ And I be hanged if I don't set some cold slices of chicken round ; for a man, if he is in love, don't want roses and strawberries when he has been fasting all day.”

“ Now will you leave us in peace ? ” As he turned away, evidently favorably impressed with her advice, she quietly opened the door.

“ Come back here, my beautiful kit,” and puss once more crouched, and leaped, and showed the mimic tigress within her.

And so it came to pass that Aubrey led May out to the exquisitely appointed table, overduely appreciating the thoughtful kindness and taste which had spread a fairy banquet for them, not knowing that it was the upheaving of a social volcano. Aubrey would wait upon her ; the clear blue eye and divine mouth holding him to gaze upon her as she trifled over the various articles until she refused to accept any thing unless he complied with her wishes and partook also.

At the end of this magical feast he invited in all the servants, old Deborah being especially called, and having pointed out their future mistress, he cordially invited them all to attend his wedding.

The house was alive after this announcement; hands grew busier; steps more eager; and when the housekeeper, after having been closeted at a late hour with Deborah, went off to the city the next morning, clad in her best black silk gown, and looking unimaginably important, the tides of social life ran higher and more vivacious under the hope and expectation of a little excitement.

With Aubrey and May there was unreserved confidence, and

"Converse sweet that strangely borrows
Present bliss from former sorrows."

As they wandered over the beautiful gardens of the Manor, every flower budded and bloomed with the glow of Paradise. The daisy, "its little golden bosom frilled with snow;" hyacinths, purple, white, and pink, and primroses, narcissi and the dim purple violet, and the jessamine, laden with its silver stars. Great purple mists ascended from the river's bed, and unrolled their kingly folds into the blaze of day. Meadows, ankle-deep in clover heads, sloped to the water's edge. Orchards promise-laden, their young leaves quivering with delight at the play of the nimble winds. And towering high among the clustering trees which embowered the lawn, the hooded robins hung nests, and held choral festival; their little hearts pulsating with music as they darted and swirled in balmy air. All this seemed not unlike heaven to Aubrey and May; for they had in their hearts the peace akin to that happy state, its unselfish love and unclouded effulgence.

With her hand in his, he could feel her heart throbbing tender, deep and true; could watch her eyes as they gleamed lustrous, and genial as summer rain.

"There is a carriage, and there is my Cousin
16*

Pierre," exclaimed May, suddenly waking out of her millenium, as they approached one of the turns in the broad entrance avenue. Aubrey was astonished to see a tall distinguished-looking stranger throw his arm about May, stoop down and kiss her, and bear her swiftly off to the carriage, as he heard him say,

"Is the old world off its axis, and the landmarks wrenched out of their places, that we have to come hither to seek you?"

May had only a moment to wonder at the vivid, highly-wrought mental altitude, which sublimated her cousin Bayard's face with a look as if he had been treading among the stars, and to say,

"You certainly are not on it, and are not inclined to let me remain," when he lifted her into the carriage, into Cathara's arms, breathless, motionless, bewildered with surprise and joy. Cathara clung to her with tears and smiles, and tender caresses, as she leaned upon her neck.

"Be a sister to me,—dear, love me—I am sorely in need of you."

"I will—I will indeed," was the reply. May forbore to ask a question, so solemn and unearthly was the lustre which veiled like a soft cloud Cathara's wan, pallid visage. As soon as the carriage was at the entrance, May half supported her to her room, where, undressing her, she made her lie down and rest.

"Don't leave me alone, will you?"

"Surely not," was the reply, caressing her lightly, as a mother would her sleeping babe. It was a comfort to see the splendor of the dark eyes bathed in happy sleep, and the immortal sheath itself more imperceptibly in its mortal guise. Where had she been? Had she just returned from England? Why had she

not written? Was it possible that she could be married to her cousin? What had befallen her, to have deprived her of the look of perfect health? And why did her Cousin Pierre look so happy, and yet so like an apparition? These, and a host of other thoughts excited her curiosity. It was well that Deborah had never spoken to her of the utter ruin and downfall of the little brown house, or she would have had another perplexing theme to dwell upon. As May continued to scan each feature of the exquisite face before her, she could see that days and nights of drear and dread had engraven their shadows there; once she stirred and murmured in her sleep, stretching out her hand,

“Save me, save me, Bayard; oh! nothing can part us now.”

May knew how entirely Cathara had always relied upon herself. She had learned how sad it is to be alone in life; to love and yet be solitary? And what is life unshared; it may flow on peacefully, usefully; but it is not happiness. And God intended that we should be happy, too, or he would not have commanded us to love the Highest with all our soul, and our neighbor as ourself; and thus her thoughts ran on, until Cathara's eyes unclosed. Refreshed and soothed, she sat up, and soon began to question May, and she replied out of a full heart. Beginning with her sad marriage with Norman Astonley, and then all that had occurred since Cathara had been absent; her acquaintance with Aubrey; her mother's death; the dreary depression of spirits; the desolation of the past winter; the storm which had overtaken her, as she was returning from the woods; her inability to make her way homewards through the driving storm; that Aubrey had found and rescued her from her mother's grave.

"This is all sad and strange enough," said Cathara, in a voice of deep sympathy, "and so far all is clear, but how is it that you dare be so content here, while that proud, cruel, reckless man still lives to claim you?"

"What! have you not heard?"—a long pause, and then in scarcely an audible voice—"He was lost in a storm, one Sunday afternoon, on the Jersey coast." May shuddered, as she went on with all that she knew.

"O Norman, Norman! O! my cousin," said Cathara, after a long silence, "Dark was the way you chose in this world of time. I forgive you all the weary days and nights of misery and terror you heaped upon me. May God forgive you also."

Then it was for Cathara to confide to May all that had befallen her, and sad and pleased by turns, and greatly marvelling at the hidden link which had controlled their lives, at last May saw that Cathara was exhausting herself.

"We must not now dwell upon these remembrances; there are others who have suffered and who now look to us for smiles and happiness, and we, I am sure, have leave to rejoice now, for our cup is full and overflowing. Have we not, sweet cousin?"

At the last word, Cathara blushed for pleasure, and said, "You love to smile like the sunbeam of summer that you are, and were born to be. I am ready to be as happy as you can possibly wish," following May softly out of the room, "but," whispering low in her ear, "cousin, not yet."

May turned, "Pierre is a wizard; he never set his heart upon any thing that he did not obtain it, and he always sets his heart on the best; he is very, very

grasping, very determined, and *so wilful*," shaking her head in a commiserating manner, "I warn you, for you'll never find him out; never, unless I tell you, he is so crafty, and then he is never twice alike; won't you get tired of these endless changes; come, what have you to say?" looking in her face with such an expressive, triumphant look.

"I should say that of course you are right, but I cling to my blind fatuity, my faith shall baffle his perversity, and then, think you, had he a hundred guises, I should not see and know my King?"

CHAPTER XLV.

EXPLANATION.

"I AM the veriest dullard, doubtless," said Aubrey, smiling, as Bayard joined him. "I cannot quite comprehend why you should bear that lady away from me, and leave me to wonder at the sudden blankness of the universe ?"

"I must beg your pardon, but we sought for my cousin May, in the home where she has always lived ; and, upon finding that a ruin, we were alarmed for her safety, and being directed hither, we resolved to assure ourselves of her well-being ; and then a lady, her friend, needed her care ; you will forgive my abruptness ?"

And after this introduction they walked on, gliding into free, open confidence with each other, the old canon of etiquette being dropped out of the question for that day. Their genial mood opened wide their hearts, now opulent with sympathy and the promise of future friendship..

The next day Aubrey drove with May to the ruined house. It was sad to her to see the home sacred by its associations, devastated, and workmen busily engaged in removing the portraits and valuable reliques.

But Aubrey was powerful to console her upon this day. He promised that the ruin should be removed,

and all made smooth with greenest mould. He was confident too, that the old tree had life vigorous at its roots to send forth boughs upon which birds could build their nests, and May smiled through happy tears.

CHAPTER XLVI.

CONSUMMATION.

THOSE whom happiness dispirits, who jeer at Romance and groan at Joy, pronouncing the latter to be a heathenish, fantastic youth, given to an immoderate and troublesome hilarity of spirit: those who can only be glad with a safe conscience, when they can find occasion to be miserable, who love sad pastimes, who cling to the grey days, or savage March weather as the best which nature offers them from her endless calendar: who believe that prudence is the highest virtue to be inculcated, they may here flutter their black gowns; draw down their cowls and take leave, for joy is in the manor-house of the Craithornes, and romance too—for there is always romance enough for all sorts of life-drama, so long as the soul of man continues to hold its germ of fire and passionate light, so long as its birthright is immortality.

In this marriage-day of beautiful purport, deck the Brides in robes the fairest and most festal, that the vision may shine as something symbolic of the celestial, and stream down and illumine the days of sorrow which so surely come to all. Let the apparelling be like sunlight trembling on foam, or the divine show of the Aurora Borealis, with fine and beautiful alliance to the lover's consecrate flower. As I look upon them, they

appear to have thoughts and images set in their minds fairer than this outward show, intuitions subtle and inspiring as perpetual genius; they are of mood steadfast and gay, so light, so earnest, so merry and wise; and upon their brows is the rapt tranquillity of Heaven. There was the spell of inexhaustible beauty about them, that spell which is of the spirit, and hence eternal.

I can assure my readers that Paul and Lina smiled as attendant members of the bridal party, and that old Mr. Somerton gave away the Brides. He bids fair to increase the days of the years of his pilgrimage upon earth; the almond tree still to flourish in his white locks, which spread long and venerable upon the good man's shoulders.

CHAPTER XLVII.

B A D E N - B A D E N .

WHEN Lulu Lee was informed of the demise of Astonley and the marriage of Aubrey Craithorne, she gave way to such a storm of jealousy and ungovernable anger as quite terrified her mother. This was followed by a fit of sulks, pique, and chagrin, until at last she upbraided that patient sufferer of all her whims, for allowing her to bury herself alive, and informed her of her intention never to return to America, that Paris was dismally ugly, and they were to set out immediately and travel all over the remainder of the known world. The submissive lady thus summarily expatriated, groaned as deeply as her nature would permit, and gathered up her reluctant powers, for if she had a positive feeling in her supine nature it was an aversion to incessant perambulation. She only asked to be let alone, and fate made a whirligig of her.

To shake off the sudden and unreasonable apathies, which seized upon Lulu, even in the height and heyday of visiting the most marvellous lions laid down in the guide-books, induced her to assume excessive high spirits and a smiling mask, that took in some simple ones, but to the wise, it was all empty enough. Lulu, with a recklessness which stood for courage, outrivalled her cotemporary travellers by the daring exploits she



undertook ; and at length, having attained unto all possible Chamouni heights, and finding the knapsack of *Ennui* still bound to her shoulders by cords invisible, but not woven of cobweb, she began to seek for rest at the summit-level of her spirit. I think it was in Baden-Baden she found it, and plenty of kith and kin, to revolve with her about fickle fortune's wheel. There the soft hand held, as in a steel vice, the gold she won. If any of my readers would like to see her at that fashionable world's convention, she may be found—but do not wait too long, or she will have lost all the little remains of beauty, and have arrived at what the French suavely term *un âge mûr*.

